

# The Lakota

The illustration is a full-page cover for a book. It features a woman in the foreground, looking directly at the viewer with a serious expression. She has long, dark, wavy hair and is wearing a wide-brimmed brown hat. Her jacket is tan with fringed sleeves and a fringed hem. She holds a silver revolver in her right hand, pointing it towards the viewer. In the background, to the left, a Native American man is riding a horse. He is wearing traditional clothing, including a feathered headdress. The background is a vast, open landscape under a dramatic, cloudy sky with shades of blue and grey.

Daniel Waterhouse



# The Lakota

By

Daniel Waterhouse

Cover illustration created by  
John Cowden



I am extremely grateful to my family who not only tolerate my imaginings but encourage them. Painting vibrant and vivid pictures with my words is the most fulfilling treasure I have ever possessed. Bolstered by the support team around me, I am set free to explore the possibility of story and engulf my spirit in the adventure before me. Thank you is in order to my children, my wife who painstakingly edited my work, my friends and folks I have never met that have enjoyed my stories over the years.

Daniel Waterhouse



## Chapter 1

### Resolution

On a cold February day in 1877, seventeen-year-old Madison Border rides the Union Pacific Railway with her mother in a crowded passenger car across the snow-covered Western plains of South Dakota. Feeling fatigued and stiff from days of switching trains and sitting for hours on end with strangers looking to find their fortune in the gold mines of the Black Hills. With a heavy sigh, she wishes it was over or never began.

Why on God's green earth did my father want to leave our wonderful life in Chicago where culture and opportunity abound. He was already very successful and provided more than we could ever ask for. His great idea was to open a bank in Bear Gulch where the prosperity of the mining operations would fuel his fortunes and secure my mother's future and mine as well. What kind of future in the undeveloped west could possibly compare to the one we already had? She wished she could take a bath. She was

aware of her own scent as well as the others around her. A stare from a man in the seat facing hers, was appraising her in a vulgar and impolite way. She shifts uncomfortably in her seat and turns to her mother.

“Mother, how much longer will we be on this horrid train?”

Madison’s mother pats her shoulder, “Two more days if all goes well, my dear child.” Madison takes a deep breath. “It will be over soon, Maddie,” said her Mother.

Maddie tilts her head and gives the man an angry squint of her eyes. He immediately looks away as though he wasn’t aware that he had been so obvious. She turns her gaze out the window and sees only the past. Her friends, the theater, the university and the activity of a thriving city. Outside the window she only sees a blank expanse of space with no possibility of providing happiness and comfort. Her dress is crumpled from travel and of course her mother tries to smooth it. Looking presentable is always important to people of her stature. Maddie was never close to her mother the way she was with her father. Mother was not playful or curious, only dutiful.

Her father’s laughter, love of a good joke, his sense of adventure, a fat cigar and Maddie, were all he ever really needed. He was reason enough to make this journey. The train begins to slow. Maddie tries to see for what reason but nothing is revealed from her window.

“What is it, Maddie?” her mother asks.

“I don’t know, I don’t see anything at all.”

The train jerks as it brakes to a stop. The passengers become curious and a man in a plaid suit throws open his



window, poking his head out to get a better look to the front.

On the track lies an overturned wagon and seven horsemen with guns drawn. The man pulls back from the window and nervously says, "Horsemen with guns. Looks like trouble." A rider boards the engine and shoots the engineer. Inside, the male passengers draw their guns. Two of the horsemen enter the passenger car and shoot the conductor.

Maddie gets down on the floor in front of her seat. Her mother stays where she is, taking a passive helpless attitude. A flurry of gunfire ensues as the passengers and horsemen shoot it out. Maddie pulls her mother onto the floor beside her. The two riders are wounded as others pour in the door behind them. The ogling man stands and fires but is hit with a bullet to his head immediately and falls on top of Maddie and her mother. Maddie hears the screams of women and children and the sounds of bodies hitting the floor amid the gunfire.

Just as quickly as it started, the gunfire stops. Maddie doesn't move a muscle or make a sound as the horsemen take cash and jewelry from the dead or dying passengers. A horseman sees the strand of pearls father gave mother and reaches for her throat. She screamed, startling the gunman and he shot her in the chest. Maddie trembled so hard she was sure she would be discovered.

She listened as the heavy footsteps of the robbers grew faint and there was no more sound but the roar of blood rushing past her ears. Still, she waited. When she was sure there was nothing that remained of the whole ordeal but

smoke and the acrid smell of gunpowder, she pushed the dead man's body off of her.

She looked out of the window and saw a man running as fast as he could through the snow and heard one final shot. She watched him fall. She saw the remaining five riders riding fast to the west.

Maddie was not the only one to witness this final murder. A lone Native American hunter wearing Elk skin sat upon a paint horse watching the horsemen ride away.

She touched her mother and found no sign of life. She didn't even resemble herself in her present state and Maddie wanted more than anything in the world to have been closer to her. Close enough to make her feel the grief that escaped her in the moment. The smell of warm bodies and new blood was overwhelming and Maddie moved quickly through the compartment toward the door. Looking out, she realized the snow was deep and the cold too severe to venture out on her own without proper clothing. Feeling nauseous Maddie breathed in the cold air deeply several times before turning back into the death filled car.

Searching, she looked around at the bodies making certain to avoid her mother's lifeless open eyes and saw a small man slumped over in his seat. She tugged at the sleeves of his coat trying to get it off of him. She managed to get one arm out of the coat and then pushed him over to remove the other. She dragged him by his feet into the center aisle, pulled off his boots and tugged his trousers by the cuff as hard as she could. Having no luck, she undid his belt and pulled again and again until he laid there with nothing but a shriveled penis and knobby old knees. "Sorry, but I need

these more than you do.” She picked up the revolver lying on his seat and spun the chamber.

Unable to unbutton the back of her dress she ripped it down the front and stepped out of it. After pulling up the man’s trousers and stepping into his boots, Maddie took a wide brimmed hat off of another unlucky soul who also happened to be wearing a fancy holster belt that held a pearl handled pistol. She knew that it would be handy to have and unbuckled it. She eyes a boy her age with a face as smooth as her own, and reasons he probably wouldn’t mind if she wore his shirt. She thought that he might even offer it up, were he still living. As she unbuttoned the boy’s shirt she couldn’t help but feel his loss. She studied his face, noting his eyelashes, small ears, slender nose, full lips and square jaw. The boy hadn’t even become a man and now he never would. He will never know the kiss of a woman or feel the bloom of love in his heart.

A tear ran down Maddie’s cheek for him or maybe it was for the whole series of events thrust upon her in just the last hour. She kissed his cheek and whispered, “Thank you.” When the last button was opened she leaned him over and his head fell forward exposing the hole in the back of his head. She squeezed her eyes shut for a second and put on the shirt.

The fancy gun belt went on next and then the dead man’s coat. She covered her head with the wide brimmed hat and let her hands disappear inside the long sleeves of the oversized rawhide jacket. She stepped off the train and walked along its side to the engine in the front where she saw the engineer lying on his back, head and arms dangling



over the side of the window. Maddie follows the tracks past the wagon, hoping civilization is somewhere at the end of this nightmare.

The Native American hunter watches Maddie move on, lifting her legs high as she struggles to wade through the deep snow. He urges his Paint forward and rides slowly to the train. Maddie sees him and runs from the tracks to a grove of trees, looking for a place to hide. The hunter passes a livestock car and hears a nicker and pawing hooves inside. He opens the wide door to the car and sets the passenger's horses free. They trot off a few yards and stop. The hunter emerges from the car carrying a bridle and a long rope. He rides the short distance to them and gently puts the rope around the neck of one of the freed horses. He turns and follows Maddie's footprints in the snow.

From behind a tree Maddie watches the hunter cross the snow following her tracks to the trees. Frightened and breathless she takes a pistol from the holster and fires in his direction. He stops but does not get off his horse. Maddie yells out in her loudest voice, "Leave me alone. I swear I'll kill you."

The hunter gets off his horse and bridles the Bay. Maddie watches closely as he lays the reins over the horse's neck and slaps it on the rear, sending it off in Maddie's direction. It stops just behind her. She looks at the gift horse and back to the hunter. Why is he doing this, she wonders. She slides her gun back into the holster gathers the reins and a handful of the horse's mane then pulls herself up on to its back. The hunter stands and watches her ride off toward the tracks.

Maddie walks the horse across a setting sun and wonders if it is the last one she will ever see. She looks over her shoulder to see if he is following behind. He isn't and she feels relieved but also frightened at the prospect of being alone in such a huge wide-open space. Maddie decides she should have thanked him somehow.

Sometime in the night Maddie dozes off to sleep and the horse comes to a stop. The hunter reappears and builds a small fire nearby to roast a rabbit he shot with his bow. Maddie awakens, smelling the food and sees the hunter crouched over the flames as they flicker in the wind. She is hesitant but hunger has set in. Warily, she approaches. He motions to the rabbit with a generous gesture. She dismounts but stays on the opposite side of the fire as if it would somehow protect her. He holds the meat out to her and hungrily she takes it and tears at the flesh, never taking her eyes off of the silent stranger that she has found reasonably attractive for an Indian that is possibly capable of savage behavior. Sort of handsome but not at all like the dead boy on the train whose shirt she now wears. Maddie is cold and much too tired to ride on and sits with her back against a tree with her legs drawn in to her chest, resting her chin on her knees. The wide brimmed hat shields her face from the wind and she's thankful she thought to take it from the man on the train.

Daylight comes, the fire is out and the hunter is gone. Maddie guides her horse back to the rails and continues to follow them to who knows where. She looks back every so often for signs of the hunter but sees nothing. She is undecided whether she wants him to follow or if she would rather that he not. Once again, she is alone.

Maddie continues her trek stopping from time to time to quench her thirst, by holding snow in her mouth to melt and drain down her throat. She sees motion ahead and strains her eyes to see in the bright morning sun. It looks like two riders coming her way. She decides to hold her ground and not run off from the tracks. She touches the gun handle tucked into the front of her belt for reassurance and climbs back on her horse. She found that the horse responds best to a clicking sound she makes with her tongue and her cheek, and urges him on.

As the riders get closer, she can make out the features of the two unkept men in bad need of a shave and a change of clothes. She feels a sudden need to stay as far away from them as possible but fights the fear and stays on course.

When they are almost face to face they realize that under those clothes is a young woman. One of the riders tips his hat as they meet. Maddie doesn't stop or acknowledge his greeting.

"Ma'am, you know yer bein' follered, don't ya?" Maddie ignores him and keeps moving. The second rider speaks up, "I'd say he's Lakota, probably huntin'. All the same, wouldn't be right to leave you on yer own". They turn back around and ride up on each side of her.

"I bet you a pretty thing under all that." Maddie glares at them and the second rider grabs a hold of her reins. "What say you give us a little peek?"

The first rider looks down the tracks and asks, "What about that Injun?"

The first rider reaches over and slides the gun from Maddie's holster. "He ain't nothin' to worry about, probably wants a little his own self."

Maddie struggles to get free but they close in tighter on her. One of them hits her hard across the face with a closed fist, knocking her to the ground. The second man jumps off his horse and tries to straddle her but she reaches for the other gun she had tucked into the waist of her trousers and fires into his throat. Blood spatters all over her face and into her hair. She watches him grab his throat with both hands. She hears him gurgle, choking on his own blood. He stands and staggers a few steps before falling into the snow. Quickly Maddie gets up and tries to get back up on her horse but the other rider grabs ahold of her hair and jerks her back down into the snow and climbs on top of her.

“Look at what you done, you killed that son-a-bitch.”, he said with a mouth full of rotted teeth and horrendous breath. “You givin’ up more than a peek now, Missy.”

With one hand he ripped open the front of her shirt and grinned with glee. Maddie struggled but he had her pinned with his weight and a strong grip in his hands. He reached down to undo his trousers and wiggled them down around his ankles. Maddie turned her head to the side wishing the Hunter would come, but she didn’t see him. The grin suddenly becomes a look of confusion and then a lifeless blank stare.

He falls on top of her. Faster than she ever thought she could move, she pushes him off and sees the Lakota standing over them both, holding a blood covered knife.

Traumatized, she runs to her horse and rides away from the horrible scene. The Lakota sees the other rider suffering in the snow and stabs him through the heart. He turns his head and watches the young woman run like a deer from

wolves. Maddie looks through her tears, pushing her horse as hard as she can.

Maddie soon realizes that she is running for no reason now and that she is tiring the horse. She needs to stop and let him rest. She stands beside the horse while he grazes on the long blades poking through the snow. Stroking his neck, she murmurs out loud, "When I see my father, I will slap him hard across the face and board the first train back to Chicago, with or without him. If I can make it through this hell, I can make it on my own. That is my resolution and nothing is going to change my mind."

## Chapter 2

### A Bridge to Cross

Tired, cold and hungry, Maddie presses on. The winds that have swept across the plains for the last two days have died down and the sun feels good on her shoulders. That small comfort allows her mind to wander, but it wanders back time and again to the train and the images of her dead mother. Maddie is certain that even in the cold, Mother and the other passenger's bodies are beginning to rot away. Another train will follow those tracks and come upon the gruesome remains of what should have been an uneventful passage. She wonders about the boy and feels another pang of sadness sweep over her. Should she go back and wait for the train that will surely come? No. There has to be a town waiting for her with open arms, just around the bend or maybe over that gently sloping hill.

The horse stops and Maddie is brought back to the moment. They have arrived at a trestle over a small river. She urges the horse forward but he refuses and turns



around. Maddie climbs down from her horse and starts to lead him across but he balks.

“Come on, please, it’s the only way.” She pulls on the reins as hard as she can, clicking her cheek with her tongue.

Frustrated and angry, Maddie tries to mount the horse but he spins around in circles. She gets a firm grip and pulls herself up and turns him back to the crossing. She kicks him hard and the horse rears up and over on his back. It gets up and runs off. Maddie picks herself up from the ground and screams, “God dammit.” She stands watching the horse moving further away. She looks at the trestle and starts walking forward, carefully stepping on the ties as she goes, not wanting to suffer an injury.

The Lakota hunter watches Maddie cross the trestle from below at the river’s edge. With four pheasant tied and laying across the Paint’s neck, he effortlessly mounts and follows a trail back up to the tracks and rides away to the side where Maddie and her horse parted company.

She reaches the far side of the trestle and takes off her hat and runs her fingers through her matted dark brown hair. She thinks it silly to wish for a hair brush and a bath when there are more important things to be concerned with, but she does. She puts the hat on top of her head and walks on, looking over the sudden change of terrain. Her eyes lock onto a coyote ravenously tearing the flesh from a prairie dog. It looks up, seeing Maddie and trots away with his prize locked in his jaws. For the first time, Maddie realizes that there are dangers in the open wilderness she is vulnerable to and checks both of her pistols for bullets. Three bullets in one and five in the other. She feels more



secure. Security to her before this ordeal was her Father, not the cold steel gun she relies on now for her survival.

The hunter finds Maddie's horse with little effort and starts after her. He leads her horse across a shallow bend in the river and back up to the tracks.

Maddie feels weak from hunger and her legs are tired already from walking through the snow. Loneliness makes her sad and she knows she needs to shake it off and stay strong. The hunter rides up to her from behind. She smiles and wishes he knew her language so she could express her relief and gratitude. He seems to know.

The wind comes up again and they slowly move against it until dark. He stops and Maddie knows this is as far as they will travel tonight.

The fire he built is warm and his face is lit from its flames. He places more twigs in it for comfort after Maddie's belly is full of pheasant. She thinks he is quite handsome in this light. She blushes. Surely, she is reading much more into their silent relationship than there really is. Then again, she reasons, he did save her from the bad men who tried to take her and he did bring her a horse, twice. Now her belly is full again, because of him. She is sure it is just his Knight in Shining Armor actions that are turning her thoughts to romance. She smiles to herself and tries hard not to watch his every move.

He turns away from her, going to his horse, and unties a piece of rawhide from rolled up blankets and drapes one across her shoulders. He clears away snow with his feet and lays a piece of Elk hide on the ground. The hunter sits down on the hide and pats it behind him.

“Do you want me to sit?” For the first time, he smiles and pats the hide again. “Then I will sit.” Maddie sits down beside him. The hunter says something she doesn’t quite understand and pats the back of his shoulder. Maddie looks quizzically at him; then suddenly realizes he wants to sit back to back. “Makes perfect sense. We lean up against each other.” Maddie says, out loud. She settles in and feels the warmth of his body against her back and thinks about the slight smile he shared with her.

The wind died out and the night was still when Maddie finally drifted into sleep. As the morning sky begins to color the East, Maddie is suddenly awakened by the hunter’s movement. She lifts her head when she hears the hunter’s voice. He stands with three mounted Native American tribesmen. They all stare at her as he talks to them. One of them raises his voice and Maddie becomes frightened. They turn and ride away. The hunter watches after them for a moment and stirs the fire. He must have been explaining her presence but she can’t be sure. She wonders why the one sounded so angry. It has to be because she’s white and white settlers bring disease like small pox that the Native has no resistance to. The railroad brought hunters of their own to decimate the bison herds, making it difficult for the Native to survive. The miners came to strip the special place with no respect to the spirits of the land. He had his reasons, Maddie thought and wondered now about her safety and the loyalty of the hunter.

She thinks it would be a good idea to move on and gets her horse. She follows the tracks, wondering when this will all come to an end. She sees the hunter riding away across the plains. “That answers my question about loyalty.”

## Chapter Three

### The Dead Train

She hears a strange noise in the distance behind her and brings the horse to a stop. She looks behind her, listening. A black plume of smoke floats low in the sky behind her. Could it be? Her heart races at the thought of a train coming her way. “Finally, I’m going to be saved”, she said with great excitement in her voice. As the train steams its way closer, she sees two plumes of smoke and sees that a second train follows behind. Her heart sinks. The past few days have been numbing to her mind, but what lies aboard that train comes into clear focus again.

Maddie turns the horse to face the train. She takes off the wide brimmed hat and waves it in the air. The engineer sees her and pulling on the chain, blows the whistle. Maddie’s horse is getting nervous and moves about trying to get away from the tracks. Maddie holds him steady and continues to wave. The train brakes and slows down. The screeching brakes frighten the horse and he rears up then suddenly bolts to the side, dumping Maddie at the side of the tracks.

The engineer yells out to her,” What are you doing out here, girl?”

“I was a passenger on this train when they came and murdered everyone on board. My mother is in there, dead.”

He takes off his cap and scratches his head. “Come on up here, young lady.”

Maddie scrambles up into the engine. The fireman shovels in more coal. “I’m sure you don’t want to go back there. You can ride up here with us. It’s a lot warmer here anyhow.”

“Thank you”, Maddie said.

The engineer says,” We were sent to look for the train after a telegram came saying it never arrived at the next stop.”

He looks sympathetically at Maddie and continues. “We had no idea what we were coming up on. Thought there might have been a breakdown or a track problem. We brought a mechanic and a car with ties, rail, spikes and chinamen to fix whatever was broken but we just had to move a wagon off the tracks and ... cover the bodies as best we could.”

Maddie hears what he is saying but is relishing the warmth of the engines furnace and movement that she doesn’t have to struggle with. The reality of her mother’s murder is another kind of struggle she is trying to shrug off. That proved much easier than shaking off the feelings of abandonment she suffers from the Lakota who went his own way.

“How much longer until we get to Bear Gulch?” Maddie asks.

“Later today, not much before dark.”, the engineer replied. Maddie wonders if her father will be there to greet her or if he even knows yet what happened. If he doesn’t, she can’t imagine how to handle telling him about Mother. For now, she is content to be warm and moving towards the end of this unexpected journey. The train rolls on through the day.

The sun is low in the sky when she sees signs of something that resembles civilization. Wooden storefronts on both sides of a dirt main street and one new brick building at the end of it. Maddie squints into the sun as she looks at it. That must be my father’s bank. The train slows to a stop on the outside edge of the little town and she feels like it might be a mistake. Why would Father bring us to this godforsaken place as she steps down from the train? There is no one there to greet the only living passenger so she walks down the street to the front door of the new brick building. No mistake about it, this is his new venture for sure. She opens the door and steps inside.

A man inside the teller cage looks up through his spectacles. “May I help you?”

“Yes, I’m Looking for my Father, Mr. Border.”

“I see, just one moment, please.”

Maddie waits as the man knocks on the door to her Father’s office. From inside the office, Maddie hears her father’s voice boom out from behind the door. “What is it?”

The man says, “A young woman is here to see you, she says she is your daughter.”

The office door flies open and Father rushes out, pushing past the man. He looks around and is astonished when he realizes that the dirty woman in men’s clothing is Maddie.

Maddie's Father searches her face and can't find words as he tries to fathom how it comes to pass that she is wearing a big hat and a gun strapped to her waist. Maddie begins to sob uncontrollably.

He looks at the clock on the wall then turns to the teller, and says, "I will be out, lock up in an hour."

Father turns Maddie toward the door and they exit onto the street.

"Where is Mother?"

Maddie takes a deep breath; her red eyes overflow again and the tears stream down her face. "There is no other way to say this, she is dead on the train at the end of the street."

Maddie watches for his reaction. He turns quickly, looking down the street saying nothing. He places his hands on Maddie's shoulders and looks deep into her eyes, searching for another answer but there is none. He starts toward the train with Maddie trying to keep up with his hurried pace.

They reach the train and Maddie grabs ahold of his arm and says, "Daddy, she's been dead for almost three full days, there are a lot of bodies in there. Let me get the engineer and see what we need to do to claim her body and make arrangements." He nods his head and stares at the passenger car. Maddie goes to the engine where the engineer is and climbs aboard.

"I need to get my Mother's body from the train and get her to the funeral parlor. Can you wait for us to do that before you leave?"

"Yes, we'll wait, but you need to be quick about it. We leave in thirty minutes. I'm sure there are folks waiting at our next stop."



“Thank you.” Maddie climbs down and runs to her grief-stricken Father. She sees that he is in shock and not thinking straight. “Daddy, where is the funeral parlor?”

He points down the street and says, “Same side of the street as the bank.”

“I’ll be right back,” Maddie says. “Don’t go in there.”

In a quivering voice he says, “I won’t. I’ll be fine.”

Maddie runs down the street to get the undertaker. When Maddie returns, she finds Father right where she left him. To her, he looks like an orphaned child, bewildered and lost.

Maddie lays her hand on his shoulder,” He’s coming to get her. Are you going to be alright?” He nods his head and wipes his nose with his handkerchief. They wait quietly on a bench inside the railroad station until Maddie sees the undertaker stop outside and climb down from the gruesome funeral wagon. Maddie stands and says,” I will take care of this Father. Stay here where it is warm.”

He watches through the window as Maddie disappears into the passenger car, with the undertaker one step behind her. Maddie covers her mouth and nose as she moves down the aisle toward the last place she saw her mother. Even though the car is cold, the smell of decaying flesh is overwhelming to her, although the undertaker doesn’t seem to notice. She passes the young boy whose shirt she wears and feels a greater stab of sorrow than she feels for the gray lifeless form that wears her mother’s clothes. Maddie tries not to focus her attention or thoughts on Mother other than to say, “That’s her.”



The undertaker says in a soft voice, "I can take it from here. Go home and come to the parlor tomorrow. We can make further arrangements at that time."

Relieved that nothing more is needed of her, she says, "Thank you," and moves quickly through the passenger car trying not to add any new images in her mind of the already too familiar scene.

Inside the station, her Father slowly rises from the wooden bench to his feet as Maddie crosses the room to him. With his back to the window, Maddie sees the undertaker shove her mother into the rear of the wagon and after he climbs aboard he urges his horse toward the funeral parlor.

"Just a minute Father, I will find someone to get our trunks down from the train." A porter goes with her to the baggage car and sets them down on the platform.

The porter tips his hat to Maddie and says, "I'll have our boy deliver them to the Banker's house." Maddie suddenly realizes that she has no idea where that might be.

"I don't have an address," Maddie says.

"Not to worry, young lady, everybody knows the Banker's house."

She returns to her father and feigns a smile, saying, "Show me our new home, Daddy."

With her arm around his waist, they slowly leave the station. Shivering as they walk down the street Maddie breaks the silence and says, "You must be hungry, it's getting late."

"I am, Jeanita will have dinner ready when we arrive."

"Who is Jeanita," Maddie questions.

"She works at the house. Nice young woman."

They turn a corner just past the bank and see an impressive, big bright new house that promises warmth and comfort but does nothing to illuminate their spirit at the moment. Maddie steps up onto the front porch of her new home and follows her Father through the ornate front door that welcomes her into a spacious foyer. Maddie is impressed with the home she certainly wasn't expecting to find in this untamed piece of the country. Father opens the door to a coat closet and hangs his coat and hat. Maddie slowly walks past him, taking in the splendor of the house he built for her and her mother. Maddie peeks into the parlor and continues past a beautifully detailed dining room featuring a table that accommodates twelve for dinner. She smiles to herself, wondering if her father even knows twelve people in this dirty mining town. Hearing a clanging in the background she continues on finding the kitchen and a beautiful dark-skinned woman she assumes is Jeanita.

With a very smooth stride, Jeanita steps from behind a chopping block in the spacious kitchen, smiling as she offers her hand to Maddie. "Hello Madison, I am Jeanita," she says.

Maddie instantly is overwhelmed by her disarming smile and sincere demeanor. "Very pleased to make your acquaintance, Jeanita." The hand she held was so warm and its touch so gentle, Maddie didn't want to let it go.

Franklin Border enters the room and raises the lid to a pot on the stove asking, "How much longer, Jeanita?"

“Just a few moments Mr. Border.” Jeanita returns to her task. Maddie asks, “Where shall I freshen up before dinner?”

Her father waves his hand and says, “Second door beyond the top of the staircase, Maddie.”

“Thank you, Daddy, I’ll just be a minute.”

Maddie walks toward the stairs and ascends the wide oak staircase.

“Will I be addressing her as Miss Border or Madison, Mr. Border?”

“She prefers to be called Maddie. She has always been Little Maddie to me but she isn’t so little anymore.” He sighs and feels the weight of the recent loss and sudden change in everything he had meticulously prepared for their arrival into a new world.

Jeanita looks down the hall not wanting to be overheard, and says, “If you don’t take offense, I will run her a hot bath after dinner.”

“None taken, Jeanita. I’m sure she would appreciate it.”

“Sir, does she always dress in that manner?” Jeanita is having a hard time understanding how a dignified, sophisticated banker would have a daughter that looks and dresses like one of the miners and horsemen she sees every day. A woman in a buckskin coat, carrying two pistols is not what she had envisioned.

Franklin Border looks down at the floor and says, “No, not at all. This is the first I’ve ever seen her like this. I didn’t even recognize her at first when she came into the bank this afternoon.

She's had one bad experience after another over the last few days. I don't know who the clothes belong to but they are definitely not hers."

"I see," Jeanita says while walking to the other side of the kitchen bringing down serving dishes from the cupboard.

Franklin Border is a strong and confident man yet somehow the questions he has for Maddie seem impossible to ask. Even now he struggles to say, "She lost her mother. Gunmen shot her on the train coming here. She lies in the funeral parlor right now. I'm trying to grasp this all right now and I must tell you, it is difficult. Very difficult."

Jeanita takes a moment, then in her most consoling tone says,

"I am so sorry for you both. I am here to help with anything. Just tell me what to do."

Taking comfort in her words, Franklin says, "Thank you, my friend."

Maddie rejoins them in the kitchen and apologetically says, "I'm not dressed for dinner but it would be silly to dress while I am so filthy from traveling." Jeanita reassures Maddie saying, "I think you'll be fine. You can't possibly do everything at once. We are going to take a nice hot bath after dinner. Now, you two go to the dining room. Your dinner is ready."

Dinner was served by Jeanita and she took a seat at the table which struck Maddie as odd. The help never ate at the table with the family in Chicago. Maddie ate heartily of the Barley Vegetable soup and noticed how at ease Jeanita was in the company of her father. Maddie is certain this is not the first time she sat at the table for dinner. Immediately

after finishing her meal, Jeanita cleared the table and disappeared into the kitchen.

“How long has Jeanita been here, Daddy?”

“About four months I believe.”

“Where does she live?”, asked Maddie.

Never looking up from a piece of bread he’s been toying with he says, “Here, with us.”

Maddie dabs her lips with her napkin and announces, “I’m ready for a hot bath and a warm bed, Daddy. We have a lot to do tomorrow with Mother’s arrangements.”

He finally raises his eyes to her and says, “Good night, Madison.”

Maddie sees that her father is weary and ready for his brandy. She kisses him on the cheek, he feigns a smile, and watches her walk to the staircase.

Maddie enters a spacious bathroom on the second floor and is startled by Jeanita’s presence. She has been drawing water from a hand pump at the front of the porcelain tub and is now carrying hot water from a stove on the far side of the room. The steam rises invitingly and Maddie excuses the primitive method. She is accustomed to a much more sophisticated plumbing, that is the norm back home in Chicago.

Maddie stands, waiting. Jeanita swishes her hand through the water and says, “It’s ready. you can get in now.”

Maddie still stands, waiting for her to leave the room. Jeanita expectantly says, “Go ahead, get in.”

Having never undressed or bathed in front of anyone, Maddie feels quite self-conscious and hesitates before unbuttoning the young boy’s shirt. Jeanita smiles sympathetically and closes the door behind her as she

leaves. Maddie examines the tear in the shirt and remembers the horrible experience by the tracks. She shakes her head, knowing there is no point in hanging on to it any longer and lets it drop to the floor. So little left to hang onto she thinks, as she unbuckles the holster around her waist. Maddie isn't about to lose sight of her only security in this wild frontier. She gently hangs the gun belt on the back of a nearby chair. She pulls off the deadman's boots and wool trousers then slowly sinks into the comfort of clean warm water. Maddie couldn't help but wonder about this mysterious woman, Jeanita. How is it that she works in the house for Father and takes residence as well? Where is she from? Her name, it isn't Indian, yet she looks as though she is. She is beautiful, yet unassuming. Maddie is tired and knows that answers to all her questions can wait.





## Chapter Four

### The Miwok

Mother's burial was simple enough with just a few words from a stranger, heard only by Maddie, her father and Jeanita to round out the gathering. They all rode in the carriage in silence. Maddie supposes it was to be a time of reflection, but on what? She is more concerned about what comes next, not what has already passed. Father guided the carriage onto the street that leads to the fine new house but a feeling of dread overshadows as she watches it come closer and closer. As big and fine as it was, she felt as if she were a bird in a cage with no purpose or direction.

She couldn't bear the thought of sitting in a parlor for hours on end with the next meal as the highlight of the entire day. Maddie looks over at her father, still lost in grief and knows that he is going to want to learn what happened on the train. Sooner or later he is going to ask her about the days she spent alone before getting here. For his sake and hers, it will wait until then, she reasons.

Jeanita who rode in the seat behind them, now takes the reins from Father as Maddie climbs out and walks up the

front steps onto the porch. Father comes up behind her and opens the door.

Would you like me to put water on for tea?"

Her Father smiles, "Yes, that would be very nice indeed."

From the kitchen window Maddie sees Jeanita come out of the carriage house and walk toward the back door.

Maddie pours water over a special tea Daddy had imported from India and carefully carries the tray to her father's study.

"I hope this is to your liking." said Maddie.

"I am sure it is, my darling." Maddie turns toward the door just as Jeanita reaches the entrance.

"If you won't be needing me, I should like to change, Mr. Border."

He said, "By all means, Jeanita, I am well taken care of." Maddie returns her father's affectionate smile and follows Jeanita through the hallway to the staircase.

Maddie watches as Jeanita glides up the stairs effortlessly with grace as if she were floating on air. She is impressed by Jeanita's grey skirt and perfectly fitted waistcoat. Jeanita pulls the pins from her hat and hair as she reaches the upstairs hallway and shakes her long auburn hair loose. Maddie is envious of the cascading waves that rest on her shoulders and curl at the small of her back.

"The trousers you asked me to wash and mend for you are laying across your bed," Jeanita said.

"Thank you Jeanita."

Maddie couldn't wait to be free of the dress she wears and the ridiculous shoes that are pinching her feet.

"Jeanita, will you go shopping with me this afternoon?"

"I can. What are you shopping for?"

"I would like more trousers, a new hat for riding. I want to look at boots too. Do we have a riding horse as well?"

"No, just the carriage horse."

Maddie tightens her lips and squints her eyes deep in thought.

"Then we will need to purchase a riding horse."

Jeanita raises one eye brow questioningly and continues to her own room.

Maddie pulls on the trousers and slides her feet back into the dead man's boots and straps the gun belt around her waist. She hurriedly leaves her room and goes to Jeanita's.

When she taps on her unlatched door, it opens just a crack where Jeanita stands in bloomers, pulling a day dress over her head. Maddie is embarrassed that she invaded Jeanita's privacy and observed her in near naked form.

"I am so sorry, Jeanita. I just meant to knock but the door opened. Please forgive my intrusion."

"I'm not bashful, not anymore. You are perfectly fine. You didn't do anything wrong."

"Are you certain?", Maddie asked. It was then that Maddie noticed an ink mark that banded her upper arm but did not want to intrude further. It was too personal a thing to ask about. Maddie looked away as Jeanita finished dressing. Jeanita didn't miss much. She caught Maddie's glance of her arm. Being observant was something she had learned to rely on years ago.

"It is the mark of the Miwok. I was born Miwok and lived near the ocean the first twelve years of my life."

"Is Miwok a name for an Indian tribe, like the Lakota?"

"Yes, but we are different."

Maddie asks, "Do you speak the same language?"

“No. The Lakota is part of the Sioux Nation and there are different languages amongst them. My language was completely different from theirs and I don’t really remember it. I haven’t been with the Miwok for twenty years now.”

Maddie didn’t want to press her but she was fascinated by all the questions that were forming in her mind as Jeanita spoke.

“I’m ready. Shall we walk?” Jeanita cheerfully asked.

The two women exit a general mercantile carrying purchases wrapped in brown paper and secured with string.

“Where is the livery? Certainly there is a horse for sale to my liking.” Jeanita turns around, pointing out a barn at the opposite end of the main street.

“Whitman Livery. Be careful. They won’t tell you if the horse is lame or sick and they will lie about the age if they can get away with it.”

“I know what to look for.” Maddie said.

Jeanita looks concerned about the time. “If you are going now, let me take your packages with me. Your father will be expecting dinner to be ready when he gets home and I need to get it started soon.

Maddie hands over her packages. “Thank you, Jeanita, for everything. I won’t be long.”

They part company and Maddie trains her eyes on the sign above the livery door. Whitman Livery ~ Stall and Feed 30 cents a day. Fine Horses for sale or trade.

Maddie enters the stable and hears a raspy voice come from deep inside. “Help you, Ma’am?”

“Looking to buy a horse,” she said.

A short man with a paunchy belly steps out of a stall and walks toward Maddie, sizing her up on his approach. "I got some for sale."

"Can you show me what you have, please?"

He starts to walk toward a stall and says, "I got a nice mare right here for a real bargain price."

Maddie looks inside the stall and throws back her head and laughs when she sees the old swayback mare. "I want a horse to ride, and that is not it. What else have do you have?"

The man strokes his chin seeing that she is no fool and knows he's going to have to let her see the good stock. "Come outside to the paddock. Might be something out there you'd be interested in."

Together they walk the length of the barn through the center aisle of the barn. Maddie listens to a phlegm rattle in his throat and a constant wheezing of breath broken only by him spitting out his chew. The sleeve of his shirt is tobacco stained from wiping his chin but he doesn't seem to care. After all that Maddie has been subjected to lately, she thinks nothing of it.

They step into the paddock and walk amongst the horses, looking them over as she moves from one to another. Maddie peers over the back of one horse and sees a familiar looking mount. She moves closer to get a better look.

"Tell me about this one."

The man spits again and says, "He's a fine one, he is. Just traded for him a couple days ago." The man wipes the tobacco onto his sleeve and continues, saying, "I know he's broke good to ride, I'm thinking he looks to be about four years and I'd have to get seventy five dollars for him."

Maddie walks around the horse and with a straight face, stares him down.

“Well Mr. Whitman I happen to know this horse and I’ve spent a few days on his back, so you would be right about him being well broke. What you might not know is that the rightful owner is now a dead man and whoever sold you this horse, is a thief. So, Mr. Whitman that means you are trying to sell me stolen property. I’ll give you forty dollars and my promise of silence concerning the matter.”

The man studies Maddie and determines her conviction is sincere, “Would you go fifty?”

Maddie looks the horse over a moment and says, “Put a saddle in at fifty and you have a deal.”

He sticks out his hand to shake on it and says, “Done.”

Maddie ignores the offer to shake hands and says, “I’ll take him now.”

Maddie closes the door to her room and hurriedly takes off her dress. She can’t wait to be rid of it and dress in her new clothes. She cuts the strings from the packages that lay on top of her bed and smiles to herself. Jeanita taps on her door.

“Come in.”

Jeanita opens the door to find Maddie admiring herself in a full-length mirror.

Maddie asks, “What do you think?”

Jeanita is at a loss for words. She takes in Maddie’s new wool trousers and shirt that definitely fit much better than the dead men’s clothes. “What is important, is that you like them.” Jeanita hesitates, then asks, “What are they for?”



“They are for everyday. This is what I want to wear from now on. No more dresses and silliness for me.” Maddie says matter of factly.

“Why”, asks Jeanita.

Maddie straps on her holster and plunges the second pistol into the front of the belt and says, “It is much easier to defend yourself dressed like this than it is to fight off a man in skirts.” She walks across the room in her new boots seeming to enjoy the sound of them on the hardwood floors.

“Dinner will be ready soon.” Jeanita turns to the door.

“Jeanita?”

“Yes.”

“Do you know where the Lakota’s village is?”

“They move around. They could be on the plains hunting buffalo for a few months and then disappear for another six.”, she says.

Maddie steps in front of her, “Do you know where they are now?”

“I have a pretty good idea, but why are you so interested in the Lakota?”

“There was this hunter, I owe him my life and I need to thank him for all he did for me. Can you speak the Lakota language?”

“A little, not much.” Jeanita passes by Maddie and leaves her room. Maddie turns back to the mirror and tops off her look with a new wide brimmed hat of her own.

Maddie swings open the door to the small carriage house in the back. She looks around and climbs a wooden ladder to a loft, examining available space for extra straw, hay and grain for a second horse. Although there are two box stalls,

the carriage house wasn't designed to house much more than a carriage horse and a place to keep the buggy. The second stall is filled with straw and hay bales that need to be moved up to the loft before she brings in her new horse. "I wonder if I can get Jeanita to help me with this." A moment later, she bounds into the house through the back door.

Jeanita dries off a pot and says, "Mr. Border is asking for you. He is in his study."

Maddie quickly moves through the kitchen saying, "Thanks, Jeanita. I'll be back in a few minutes; I have something I could use your help with." Jeanita smiles and puts the pot in a lower cupboard.

Maddie finds her father deep in thought with a look of concern upon his tired face. Maddie thinks that her Daddy doesn't look as happy as he once did and hopes that he returns to his former fun-loving ways.

"Maddie, I want to have a conversation with you about a particular matter that is troubling me." Maddie sits down in a wingback chair across from him waiting to hear his problem.

He takes a breath and still hesitates before asking, "Maddie I'm concerned about your appearance. You always wore pretty things and took great pride in your beautiful hair that seems to always be in a single braid these days. You dress like a man and carry guns. You are like a different person. You are not like my little girl anymore. What changed?"

Maddie considers her answers to his questions before blurting out, "Everything changed. We haven't talked about

it but a lot happened on the way here. Some of it I have wanted to spare your hearing about. Some is too difficult for words.”

Jeanita cleans a mirror that hangs in the hallway outside the study, overhearing Maddie’s conversation with her father. She tells him about the horsemen coming onto the train and shooting the passengers before robbing them and leaving them to die.

“All I could do was get on the floor and hide to keep from getting killed. I will never be helpless again to defend myself.” Maddie said.

Her father winces with pain, hearing for the first time what really happened to his wife.

“When it was over, I tried to get off the train and run away from it all but the snow was deep and the winter air was so cold, father. I had no choice but find something suitable to the conditions and tore clothes from dead people to save myself.

The snow was deep and hard to walk through and then I saw a hunter, he was an Indian. He gave me a horse. I thought he wanted to hurt me but he didn’t.” Maddie wipes her eyes and catches her running nose with a handkerchief. “He gave me a horse Daddy, and then he was gone.”

Her father wanted to go to her but he couldn’t move from his chair.

“There were two men who attacked me when I was out there all alone. They hit me with fists, knocked me off my horse, tore my shirt open and if I wasn’t wearing trousers, they would have, taken me.” Maddie laid her hand on the holster cradling her pistol and said, “If it weren’t for this, they would have lived to tell about it and I might not have.”

Her father looks away with his hand over his mouth, tears welling as he tries to stare away out the window. "I am so sorry, Madison. I don't know what to say."

Maddie goes to her father and kisses his cheek. "It's over Daddy. I can never be who I was before. I wouldn't want to be. I know too much now."

Jeanita quietly moves away from the study understanding now why this affluent young woman behaves so strangely. She can relate to the theft of Maddie's innocence, something that she still grieves for herself. She sees many similarities between her own experience and the suffering Maddie endures now. Saddened, she aches to bring comfort to her in some small but significant way.

Maddie wraps a rope around the last bale of straw and tosses the free end up to the loft where Jeanita waits to catch it. She pulls with great struggle while Maddie pushes up from the bottom. She climbs one step of the ladder and then the next until together the straw reaches the loft.

Maddie climbs off the ladder and leans against the straw next to Jeanita. "We did it."

"Yes, we did.", Jeanita said in between heavy breaths. "In a month we will have to do it all again unless we find a better way to get it up here."

Maddie tightens her lips and says, "I'll figure something out. This is too hard." She takes a moment to catch her breath and says to Jeanita, "I couldn't have done this without you and I know it is not expected of you to help outside the house so, I am very grateful to you for helping me. I am so glad Father found you."

“Your father didn’t find me, I found him.” Jeanita quietly says. She sees that Maddie is confused by what she said and begins to explain. “I hope you won’t think less of me but I came to Bear Gulch because I was told there was a new bank here and I needed a loan. I was told no at the bank in Deadwood because I had no proven way to repay and the banker was a customer of my owner.”

Maddie’s eyes widened and in a loud voice exclaimed, “Owner?”

Jeanita nodded her head and looked down at the floor before her feet. “By my birth and in my heart, I am Miwok. No one can take that from me.” Jeanita swallowed hard and felt the straw dust in her throat as she did. “When I was twelve, the Eel River Rangers came into my village and killed for bounty. They weren’t the only group to do this. There were others but the Eel River Rangers were the worse. They clubbed, stabbed or shot the men and cut off their heads to carry back as proof of their deed. The heads of my people paid twenty-five dollars each. I saw them murder my whole village. I hid by the river, but I saw. My father screamed when my mother’s head rolled to my 16-year-old brother’s feet. My brother knelt down to her and was jumped on by a ranger who cut his throat all the way through and carried away his head. My father lost his mind and attacked one of the rangers wildly. Another shot him dead. I watched them cut off his hands and his head. One of them rode right past me with a half dozen heads on either side of his saddle. I recognized a few of them but mostly I remember the Ranger’s blood-soaked clothes and frenzied look upon his face. Children under ten were worthless to them. I saw them run as fast as they could but the Ranger’s

caught them and beat them to death with clubs and left them where they lay." Jeanita took a moment to regain her composure. She smiled at Maddie and said, "You don't really want to hear all this."

"I do."

"They found me. I didn't think they would but they did. A rider went by and must have caught a glimpse of me because he turned around and came back. I tried to run but he ran me down on his horse. Soon he was upon me and kicked me to the ground. He got off his horse and just stared at me. He tied my wrists and made me walk behind his horse for miles and miles. He took me to a gold mine and sold me to work in the mines. I did that night and day for I think a year's time. The mine went under and I was sold again. This time I was taken across the mountains to be sold into a brothel. A whorehouse. The woman who bought me knew I had not been touched and even though I was Miwok, I was of great value to her."

Maddie is astonished at what she is hearing and can't comprehend how any of this could happen. "You were just a little girl; how could they do this to you?"

Jeanita shrugged. "For the first of many, I was a prize. The price paid for me was enormous because I was only thirteen at the time. The newness of me was eventually lost and for the next eighteen years I was worth less and less to my Madam's service. Then one day she told me that she had no need of me, that I was all used up. She said that if I paid her three hundred dollars, she could replace me and I would be free to go. I learned of your Father's bank and came here and asked for a loan. I told him the truth because there was nothing else I could say. He told me it was



against policy to loan money to an unemployed woman. I didn't know what to do so I thanked him and got up to leave and then he asked me to wait a second. He told me he needed a housekeeper and cook. He said he couldn't loan me the money but he could give me the position. Position is what he called it."

Maddie laughs, "Yes, that is what he would call it."

"He gave me the three hundred dollars to take back to my owner and said that I would work for ten months as repayment. I cried. I didn't want to, but I did. He was probably surprised that I came back. People don't trust the Indian Nation. I told him I could be generous to him but he told me about you and your mother and I knew he was a good man with honor. So, as I said, I found him."



## Chapter Five

### Free Rein

The winter faded into spring bringing color and new life to every living thing, including father, to Maddie's great relief. She felt free to start her new life and follow pursuits of greater interest. Every day she rode her horse, Jangles as she now calls him, further and further from the town's borders.

She enjoyed exploring the West and even took a bed roll with her, occasionally bedding down for the night if she had wandered too far, sometimes purposely. Maddie reveled in her discoveries and fiercely protected this private part of her existence.

When father muttered that he'd wish she'd settle for interests that were more becoming a young lady, she turned a deaf ear and told him, "There's plenty of time for that later but right now I'm happy with what I'm doing. Do you want me to be happy, Daddy?"

"Of course, I do."

“Wonderful. Then we understand each other.” Maddie added a Yellowboy 66 Winchester lever action rifle to her collection for accurate long-range shooting.

Upon seeing it, her father raised an eyebrow and asked, “What in the world are you doing with that?”

“A girl has to eat when she’s out on the trail, Daddy. It is a lot easier to shoot a rabbit with this than it is with a pistol, that’s for sure.”

Father nods in agreement and lets the subject drop. That was all the reason he needed and all that she offered. When she saw it at Slater’s General Store, she had other reasons in mind. Self-defense had become an obsession and this little rifle was just the ticket.

Maddie led Jangles out of the carriage house and stepped into the stirrup, swinging her leg over the saddle. A canvas bag with food for the ride hangs on the left side of the horn while a long leather rifle holster hung from the right. She clicked her tongue against her cheek and Jangles responded, walking toward the street. Once the town of Bear Gulch was far behind her she lifted her face to the warm sun of spring and drank in the freedom she had been aching for. She had no idea where her travels would take her today. She only knew that if she covered enough ground, she would eventually catch a glimpse of the Lakota village Jeanita told her might appear out of nowhere. Maddie hoped that this would be the time she’d cross paths with the hunter again. She listened to a warm breeze blowing gently through the grasses and relaxed in the steady motion of Jangles under a well-worn saddle.

Maddie turns her horse toward a small Chokecherry tree where she stops and lets him graze for a little while. She is content to stand under it with a long blade of grass in her mouth searching the grassy plains for signs of the hunter who had become a constant companion of her imagination.

She watches Jangles, free of his saddle and bridle and wonders how difficult it might be to ride him free of reins like the Lakota rode his pony. She thinks he must have controlled its direction communicating with his legs and body language. Slowly she walks through the grass to him and wonders how interested he might be in learning a new way of understanding each other.

Maddie reaches Jangles and pats him on the neck. "We are going to try something different boy," she quietly said.

She grabbed onto his mane and pulled herself up. He raised his head and became alert to her presence upon his back but did not move. Maddie pushed her left foot gently into his side and moved her right foot forward a little then clicked her tongue into her cheek. Jangles started walking, turning to the left as she had silently asked. She was thrilled by his understanding and this time gently pushed her right foot into his side, moving her left foot forward and he turned to the right. She patted his neck, giving him praise.

"Good boy Jangles," Maddie said.

It suddenly dawned on her that it was just like stepping off on foot in one direction or another and he was reading her command as though they were one body. She smiled and felt a new joy of discovery as they rode as one on the open grassy plains. She took him in a wide circle at a canter back to the Chokecherry tree. She leaned back with both feet forward.

“Whoa,” Maddie commanded and he came to a stop. She slid down his side and smiled broadly, marveling at the afternoon’s accomplishment.

If a horse could look disappointed, Jangles certainly did when it was time to go and Maddie slipped the bit into his mouth and threw the saddle onto his back. Still elated, she never once used the reins that lay across his neck on their ride back to town.

“Next time out, Jangles, we are going to find out if you are gun-shy and if you are, we’ll find a way to correct it. I’m sure you will be fine,” Maddie said, patting his neck.

Maddie turns Jangles onto the main street of Bear Gulch and passes the saloon where piano music spills out of the doors as a group of horsemen leave to mount up. Maddie rides past them and one of the men looks up into her face. She is startled when she recognizes him as the man who killed her mother. Maddie’s heart pounds and her body shakes with fear. It is all she can do to control herself and keep moving.

The memory of her mother’s scream and the loud burst of gunfire overwhelms her and she can’t get the picture of her mother’s bloodied body out of her head. Her fear suddenly turns to anger. She looks over her shoulder to see the five horsemen riding away with their backs to her. As violent as her thoughts have become, she is sensible enough to know she needs to be skilled with both her pistol and her rifle.

“When I’m ready, I will kill that bastard. I will kill them all,” she muttered between clenched teeth.

Maddie walks through the back door where Jeanita is preparing dinner.



“Is my father home yet?”

Jeanita says, “No I haven’t seen him but it is still early”

That was just what Maddie wanted to hear. “I saw some men coming out of the saloon and I think, actually, I know they were the same men that killed my mother and everyone aboard the train”, she said. She paced back and forth through the kitchen.

Jeanita pulled out a chair at the kitchen table and said, “Sit down and we’ll talk about it”

Maddie plopped down across the table from Jeanita and leaned in saying, “I don’t want father to know. He’ll just worry and be fearful for me and won’t let me out of here. They didn’t recognize me because when they saw me back then, I looked a lot different. I was wearing a dress at the time”

“What do you plan to do?”

“I don’t know yet. I need some time to think it over, but I’m not letting father find out about it”

Jeanita asked, “What do you want me to do?”

“Just keep it between me and you. Can you do that for me?”

Jeanita wasn’t sure it was the right thing to do, but she said, “Yes, I can do that”

Maddie’s father, Mr. Border, usually takes his lunch in town, but thought a little walk to the house instead would be better on a sunny spring day. He came through the front door and walked to the kitchen.

He didn’t see Jeanita and then called out for Maddie from the bottom of the staircase in the foyer.” Where is everyone, “he muttered on his way back to the kitchen. Mr. Border

looks out of the kitchen door where Jeanita takes clothes down from the line behind the house.

He walks up behind her and asks, "Do you know where Madison is?"

"No, Mr. Border. I haven't seen her all morning. I called her down for breakfast and when she didn't come down, I went to check on her but her room was empty"

He scratches his chin and says," What has gotten into her"

Jeanita doesn't say a word, as she places an iron on the stove top to get hot.

"Would you be able to put together a little something for lunch, Jeanita? I'm feeling a bit hungry and need to get back to the office soon"

"Yes, sir"

He drops a newspaper onto the table that had been tucked under his arm and sits down, his eyes scanning the front page. Jeanita sets his lunch down in front of him.

"Thank you, Jeanita"

"Of course, sir. He slides the paper off to the side where she catches a glimpse of an article midway down the page.

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD OFFERS  
REWARD FOR THE CAPTURE OF  
INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THE  
MURDERS AND ROBBERIES OF  
RAILROAD PERSONNEL AND  
PASSENGERS.

She hoped he would leave the paper behind when he returned to the bank so that she could read more. She had not had a proper education, but learned to read at the

brothel from another whore who was well educated, but after falling on hard times, became a prostitute like Jeanita.

Mr. Border pushes his chair away from the table, "I am going back to the office to work now. I am having dinner with clients this evening and it could be late before my return. If Madison is hungry, fix something simple for her, please."

"Yes, sir"

He turns and walks toward the front door without his paper. Jeanita listens for the closing of the front door. When she hears it latch, she picks up the paper and begins to read on.

It was reported to an employee of the Union Pacific railroad, that a single surviving passenger's account of the ordeal, claims there were seven men involved in the crimes but two were killed by fellow passengers. Five men remain at large and a five-hundred-dollar reward is offered for the capture of each of the men involved, upon their conviction. No description is available.

Jeanita becomes frightened knowing that it is Maddie who is that lone survivor. Maddie saw them in town. What if they see the paper too? Could she be in danger? She picks up the paper once more and reads it again. She is relieved that there is no mention of whether it was a man or a woman. Where is she, Jeanita wonders and wishes she was home.

With Jangles beside her, Maddie takes aim at a drawing of a face she put on the trunk of a tree and fires her

Winchester. Jangles has become accustomed to the noise and ignores the loud sound. Maddie walks to the tree and examines the drawing that is covered with holes from her previous shots with both pistols and the Winchester. Smiling, she returns to Jangles.

“We’re going home, boy” She climbs into the saddle and turns him with her legs toward town.

A rabbit is stirred by Maddie’s presence on the trail and begins to run. She stops Jangles and brings the Winchester up to her shoulder and fires but misses.

“Dammit all! Maybe next time.” Jangles never flinched and she pats his neck. “Good boy, Jangles. Good boy”

She stops to pick wildflowers she saw earlier in the day. She picks enough of the colorful blooms to make two bunches. One to leave at the cemetery on her Mother’s grave and the second bunch for Jeanita. She didn’t know why she thought Jeanita might appreciate them, but felt like showing her the appreciation she has for her and all she does.

Maddie stepped into the house with the flowers behind her back. “Jeanita, where are you?”

“In Mr. Border’s study.”

Maddie walks to the open door where she finds Jeanita sweeping the floor with a broom. She holds out the wildflowers and says, “For you.”

Jeanita smiles and walks quickly to Maddie and takes them from her hand. She holds them to her nose and with her eyes closed, breathes in the fragrance of the fresh flowers.

Jeanita says, "Thank you, Miss Border. They are lovely but you really needn't do that."

"Why not? Can't a girl just be nice to somebody? And another thing, my name is Maddie. That's what I want you to call me. When you say, Miss Border, it sounds like we aren't friends."

Jeanita looks down at the floor and says, "I don't want to seem inappropriate and assume friendship, considering my employment."

Maddie stands close to Jeanita and says, "I need a friend, Jeanita. I'll tell you what, if it makes you feel better, you can call me Miss Border when Father is around. How's that?"

Jeanita looks bashful as she nods her head.

"Settled then," Maddie said and walked up the stairs as Jeanita hurried off to the kitchen to get her flowers in water.

Maddie entered her room and saw the newspaper laying on her bed. She picked it up and seeing the headline, sat down on the edge to read the story. She puts the paper down beside her when she'd finished and mulled it over.

She sprang up from the bed with newspaper in hand and ran down the stairs calling for Jeanita and finds her sweeping in the dining room. "Yes, Miss Border?"

"There you are. Did you put this paper in my room for me to see?"

"Yes, I thought you should know."

"Did Daddy see it?"

"I can't say for sure, but I don't think he did."

Maddie paced about the room. She stopped in front of Jeanita and asked, "Do you think I should go to the sheriff

and tell him it was me? You know, tell him I'm that survivor. I could give a description of at least one of them."

"I think it would be the right thing to do, Miss Border," Jeanita replied.

"Jeanita please, it's Maddie."

Jeanita uncomfortably says, "Yes Maddie, it is the right thing to do."

"I'm going there right now. Will you come with me?"

Jeanita hesitates but after searching Maddie's eyes says, "Yes. I'm ready."



## Chapter Six

### The Awakening

Together, Maddie and Jeanita stepped into what looked like a converted storefront that now served as the Sheriff's office and jail. No one else appeared to be in the building. An old desk with a chair behind it and two pushed against the wall were the entire contents of the office. A door behind the desk, one would assume, is where the jail was holding a law breaker of some kind. They sat on the chairs against the wall and waited for someone to appear and hear what they had to say. As Maddie thought of how she was going to say what needed to be shared, a voice could be heard outside of the door.

"Jesus woman nobody gives a damn about your chickens. If you'd put 'em up like everybody else, they wouldn't wander off. Nobody stole those damned birds. Now, good day."

The door opens and a man who appeared to be in his late sixties enters the office with a limp and asks, upon seeing the two women, "What can I do for you?"

"I would like to speak with the sheriff," Maddie says.

"That would be me young lady," the man said.

Maddie looks him over in disbelief then leans forward telling the sheriff everything she can remember about the entire ordeal, including her recent encounter with them on the street outside the saloon.

After Maddie's detailed description of the men is heard, the sheriff sits back in his chair and says, "You've just described about every man in the territory, Miss Border." He leans forward and asks, "Aren't you the daughter of the banker?"

"Yes sir, I am"

"Myer, I'm Sheriff Myer."

"Pleased to meet you, Sheriff Myer," Maddie said.

He looks at Jeanita and asks, "You work for Border now, don't you?"

"Yes," Jeanita said.

"Do you still whore?"

"No sir, she most certainly does not," Maddie said emphatically.

The sheriff lets out a heavy sigh and says, "I mean no offense, just like to know who I'm talking to."

Maddie leans forward in her chair and asks, "Are you going to send your deputies out to find them and arrest them?"

"Number one, I don't have any deputies and number two, we don't know who they are. I can't just go arrest every unshaven rough looking man in town. I only have two cells."

Maddie is speechless. She fumes as she remembers the uniformed police force that protected Chicago. This type of

law enforcement would never be acceptable anywhere but here. One old man with a limp and no deputies is all there is to bring in five murdering thieves? Maddie stands and Jeanita rises beside her.

“Thank you for your time, Sheriff Myer. Please let me know if you make any progress with the case,” Maddie said as politely as her disgust would allow.

The Sheriff scratches his head and says, “Sure enough will, Ma’am.”

Maddie and Jeanita step out and onto the street. “He’s not going to do anything at all,” Maddie said.

“But, what can we do about it?”

“Well, Jeanita, I’m going to have to bring them in myself and testify against them in a court of law. If there is one.”

Jeanita, knowing the Judge as a former client, said, “He comes to town once a month to hear cases.”

“You know him?”

Jeanita smiles sheepishly, “Better than his wife does.”

Maddie stops in her tracks and says, “When my head clears, we need to talk about your former employment. I have so many questions.” Maddie shakes her head and walks on.

The spring days rolled on into summer and every chance Maddie had, she was out in the open spaces. Becoming the best shot in the country was her only focus now. That and the day when that achievement would be tested. With her pistols, she became so fast and accurate, there was scarcely a doubt she could handle herself against any man in the whole of the Dakota territories. She could hit any target, moving or not with her Winchester rifle from a fast gallop

or a dead out run on the back of her best friend, Jangles. She knows she is ready to face the murdering thieves and when she finally does, she will show them the same mercy they showed the men, women and children on the train that cold day last winter. One particular face is burned into her memory and Maddie won't be content until she blows it right off of the bastard that killed her defenseless mother.

Maddie brings Jangles to a stop and shares cool water with him from a canteen. "We make a good team, Jangles," she said. She heard a soft booming like the sound of a drum a long way in the distance. So soft that she wasn't sure she heard it at all or just wanted to, hoping to finally catch a glimpse of the Lakota village Jeanita said would eventually appear.

"Come on Jangles."

She rode slowly with the hot afternoon sun in her face, savoring what little breeze there was against her sweaty neck and face. When she reached the crest of a gently rolling hill, the drum became louder and she heard voices in song or celebration under the steady beat. Then she saw it. A good distance across the grassy plains, was an entire thriving city made up of elk hide covered dwellings and the movement of hundreds of people moving about. At one end, a large group gathered where the drum was being struck. They danced in colorful regalia and elegant feathered head dress, moving in ways she had never witnessed before. It was so strange and wonderful to Maddie. She was entranced by the motion and rhythm. She felt a passive connection but also the loneliness of being on the outside without a welcoming invitation. Still, she was

glad she was presented with an opportunity to observe. Does he live among them? If he sees her, will he be glad their paths crossed again?

"He might not even remember us, Jangles. Let's go home." She turns him to the East and not only feels the sun on her back, she feels as though she has left something behind. Something unfinished. He was there. He saw them ride away in the snow last winter and he saw me alone in the cold. The hunter was a witness. He must remember. If for no other apparent reason, that was purpose enough to find him once again. Maddie took comfort in the logic that blanketed the truth.

Jeanita steps out of the butcher shop in town when Maddie catches sight of her. She is certainly easy to spot. Always impeccable with her dress and hair neatly done up under a fashionable hat. Maddie thinks Jeanita might overcompensate her appearance due to her reputation from her former employment. She always looks respectable and that is probably all she really wants.

"Jeanita," Maddie calls out.

"Hello Maddie."

Maddie asks, "Do you know anybody who speaks the Lakota language?"

Jeanita smiles and replies, "Yes, as it happens, I do."

"Great! Because I found the Lakota Village today. I'll tell you all about it when you get back to the house."

Jeanita jostles her packages and says, "I'd love to hear about it and why you need someone to speak to them."

Maddie sees her struggling with the packages and says, "I'll carry these home."

“Thank you, Maddie.”

Jeanita hands them up to her and she clicks her tongue in her cheek, urging Jangles homeward.

Maddie primes the hand pump with a pitcher of water and begins pumping water into the trough outside the carriage house for Jangles and the carriage horse. The carriage horse is a little standoffish with Jangles and doesn't seem to have the same adoration he holds for her. Maddie thinks that maybe if she had a name she would feel more connected to everyone and decides that Arrabelle is a good fit for the Bay. She hears a sweet voice floating out of the kitchen window, singing a cheery version of a bawdry tune Jeanita probably picked up in the brothel a long time ago.

Maddie walks swiftly toward the back door with a big smile on her face and the wide brimmed hat in her hand. She walks through the back door and Jeanita abruptly stops singing.

“Don't stop. You sing so nice.”

Embarrassed, Jeanita asks, “You heard me?”

“Yes. It was wonderful.”

Maddie's father was oblivious to her excitement at dinner. She sat across from him and listened as he told her about his day at the bank and the two new significant accounts that were opened late in the afternoon by a pair of soon to be rivals in the mining industry. It was all she could do to contain herself and not jump up from the table to talk to Jeanita privately.

She stayed and dutifully showed as much interest as one can expect considering she never really heard anything he



said. Maddie knows her father needs to feel as though things are once again swinging his way and she would not want anything to slow his progress. He has put a few pounds back on and his color is much better and once his sense of humor has returned, she won't feel the need to be as cautious with him. She has even started to dress like a young woman for dinner because she knows he likes to see the familiar old Maddie when he can. That is not often however, because the minute dinner is over she peels out of the dress and back into her trousers. It is a compromise that developed without conversation, but works for them both. Father belches quietly and backs away from the table, excusing himself to his study to sip a brandy and pull on a fat cigar. Maddie welcomes the opportunity and pretends to go upstairs but quietly slips back to the kitchen.

Maddie leans against the kitchen counter next to Jeanita and says, "the Lakota hunter was a witness to what happened, at least he saw them ride away from the train. I need whoever it is you know that speaks the language, to ask him to come forward and testify as a witness against them if it should come to that. Of course, that can't happen until I capture them."

"Your plan is to find them, somehow capture them, identify them as the murderers and see them convicted."

"And collect the reward money," Maddie added. "I know it sounds impossible but no one else is going to do it."

Jeanita shakes her head and then looks into Maddie's eyes. "I know you want to see this through to the end but, a lot of things could go wrong and I hate to see you put

yourself in harm's way. If anything happened to you, your Father would never survive it."

"Jeanita, I need you to do this for me, please," Maddie pleaded.

Jeanita thought about it for a moment then said, "I know someone. We can ask her tomorrow."

"Her?"

Cautiously Jeanita says, "Yes, she's a woman I know from the past. I have to warn you, Rose is a, shall I say, working girl."

Maddie smiles and with a giggle says, "She's a real Painted Lady?"

Jeanita turns away, and places a dinner plate in the neatly organized cupboard. "Rose works in a house just outside of town across the creek. We can see her there. I don't think Mr. Border would approve, so we will have to be careful not to be seen."

"Of course," Maddie exclaimed.

She could hardly get to sleep that night. It might have been partly because it was so warm in her upstairs room, but most likely it was her imagination. She wondered what the whores would look like and if she'd see any of their clientele while she was there. She supposed the house would be perfumed and decorated with fancy wallpaper and expensive furnishings. She exhausted herself thinking about it all and finally fell into a fitful sleep.

After breakfast, Mr. Border checked his tie in the foyer mirror, gave the knot a little tug and called out, "I'm off to the office, Maddie."

Maddie had been anxiously waiting for that announcement.

Cheerfully, Maddie appeared from behind him and kissed his cheek.

“I’ll see you tonight then, Daddy.”

He stepped out the door and down the front steps. Maddie watched as he briskly walked down the street with great importance and purpose. She was glad to see his confidence had returned to what it once was. His drive is what kept him vital and had much to do with his success in the business world.

She turned on her heels and strode quickly to the stairs and called up, “Jeanita, Daddy left. How much longer before we can leave?”

When Jeanita didn’t immediately answer, Maddie ran to the top of the stairs and down the long hallway. When she reached Jeanita’s room, she tapped on the door. Jeanita opened it and stepped back. Maddie was stunned. Jeanita wore a burgundy waist coat and long matching skirt. She was in a white blouse to match white lace gloves and beautiful black shoes to go with a very fancy black hat. Her cheeks were rosy and she had just a touch of a very intoxicating perfume.

With just a hint of mischief in her voice and the faintest of smile she said, “I’m ready when you are.”

Maddie took off her wide brimmed hat and bowed down in a gentlemanly fashion and said, “Good morning, Ma’am, I would be honored to escort you.” With a wave of her hand toward the hall she added, “After you, my dear lady.” They both laughed at Maddie’s silliness and went down to the carriage house.

For the first time in months, Maddie felt awkward and out of place in her trousers, gun belt and hat. As she drove

Jeanita in the carriage, she could barely keep from staring at the striking woman beside her. Just ahead of them lays a tired looking old house covered in grey weathered clapboard.

Jeanita says, "This is it."

Maddie looks upon the dirt covered windows of the old house with disappointment. She had been thinking that it would be well kept and tidy with a manicured lawn and painted shutters. The front door stood wide open but it was hard to see through it in the bright morning sun. With all of the curtains drawn, very little light entered the room on the other side of the threshold. Jeanita knocked on the door frame and stepped through, into the darkness. Maddie wasn't sure if she should follow her or not. Jeanita motioned to Maddie and she stepped inside. She didn't move, waiting for her eyes to adjust. The unmistakable sound of a woman's heeled shoes on a hardwood floor came toward them from the back of the house. A woman's raspy voice followed close behind.

"Who'd be a callin' this early in the mornin'?"

"It's me, Jeanita," she called out.

A woman stepped out from the shadows into the room smoking a cigarette. Maddie was startled by her appearance. She looked to be drunk and puffy eyed with red hair falling down from a bun that looked as though it had been put up days ago. The heavy-set woman in a dirty wrinkled dress said, "What brings you out here, Darlin'?"

"We were hoping to see Rose, Edith."

"That would be fifteen dollars but she ain't up yet."

Looking at Maddie she continues, "You can give her a toss later young man, but if you can't wait that long, I'll raise

my dress for ya if you got ten bucks.” Edith lets out a scratchy laugh that quickly becomes a cough that won’t stop. Her face turns red and finally steps out the front door onto the porch. She clears her throat and spits over the rail. The house smells of smoke and booze mixed with old dust and perfume. Maddie is sure she is going to be sick if she doesn’t step out for fresh air.

Jeanita steps out onto the porch with Maddie right behind her. “When is a good time to come back and see her,” Jeanita asks. Edith squints into Jeanita’s face, having a hard time focusing in the bright sun. Edith says, “Give her til sometime this afternoon, I’d say. She had a pretty rough night.”

“Thank you. We’ll be back. Mention we were here if you think of it.”

“Sure will honey. Bring him on back and Rose’ll get him all fixed up.”

Together they step down from the porch and into the carriage. “She thought I was a man.”

Jeanita said, “I wouldn’t give it another thought. You saw her. She was half a sleep and still drunk from the night before. Besides, she never did get a good look at you.”

“I saw more of her than I needed to, that’s for sure. I can only hope your friend, Rose, is in better condition than that one.”

“Believe me, she is,” Jeanita proclaimed with conviction.

Maddie asked, “What is she like?”

“Well, she’s young. Not quite as young as you but pretty close. Maybe twenty, twenty-two. Long brown hair, hazel eyes. She’s little, a couple inches shorter than you. Pretty little face and a very feminine figure.”

“How does she know the Lakota Language? She doesn’t sound like she would be Indian,” Maddie asks.

“Half. She is half Lakota. Her mother was raped by a white man. A buffalo hunter. Rose was never accepted, only tolerated within the tribe. When she was barely old enough to fend for herself, her mother was told by the elders to set her free. Rose was more than ready. She had been picked on and made fun of throughout her childhood and welcomed the opportunity to go.”

Maddie thought about it as they drove on the dirt road to town.

“You seem to know a lot about her. Have you known her long?”

Jeanita said, “Only a couple of years, but we got pretty close.”

Maddie didn’t want to intrude on their friendship any further and said, “Maybe I’ll meet her this afternoon.”

The clock in the foyer chimed at 2:00 that afternoon and Maddie was more than ready to go back to the whorehouse with Jeanita.

“Jeanita, it’s two o’clock. Do you think we could go to meet Rose?”

Jeanita stopped polishing silver and said, “I’m sure it’s late enough by now.”

Maddie tossed her hat onto the top of her head and said, “I’m ready.”

When they arrived, Edith yelled into the house from the front porch, sitting in a stained old chair with stuffing coming out from the tears on the upholstered arms. “Rose, Jeanita’s here to see you with a feller”



Rose appeared in the doorway and exclaimed, "Jeanita!" She rushed down the steps and into Jeanita's arms. They hugged each other for a long time and Maddie watched Jeanita's lacey white gloves patting Rose's back. She knew they were very happy to see each other.

Jeanita said, "Rose, I'd like you to meet my friend and employer, Miss Madison Border. Maddie, this is my dear friend Rose that I have been telling you about."

"Pleased to meet you Rose," Maddie said.

Edith stood up and squinted her eyes to get a better look at Maddie, then said, "Sweet Jesus girl, I thought you were a boy."

"Yes, I am a girl," Maddie said smiling.

"I'd have never knowed it by them clothes yer wearin'"

Rose turned on Edith and sharply said, "Edith, be nice. We have company." Taking Maddie's hands, she added, "Don't mind her. She doesn't see very well."

Maddie spent the next hour on the front porch telling Rose everything that had happened from the moment the train stopped that horrible day to seeing the same men come out of the saloon. Jeanita sat quietly and Edith listened intently while rolling one cigarette after another the whole time.

When she was sure the time was right, Maddie asked, "Rose, will you help me find the hunter?"

"I don't know who the hunter is, but we can ask my mother. I know where they will be this time of year. When do you want to go?"

"As soon as we can Rose," Maddie said.

Rose nodded her head and said, "It is a half days ride from here. I'll have to rent a horse at the livery. Are you willing to pay for it?"

Maddie soon realized that any dealings with a whore are all business. Without hesitation, she agreed.

Rose looked over at Jeanita then added, "I'm not going to be able to work tonight and be fresh in the morning for the ride. Upon our return, I will be too tired to work that night either. I will be out at least sixty dollars. Can you cover it?"

Maddie looked to Jeanita for reassurance that saying yes was the right thing to do, but Jeanita's demeanor gave her no clues.

Maddie took a deep breath, stuck out her hand to Rose and said, "Yes, I can do that."

Rose cocked her head to one side and said, "Meet me at the livery at seven tomorrow morning."

Jeanita stood up and Rose hugged her once again then disappeared through the open door.

Edith hacked and spit over the porch rail and said, "Quite a tale ya told. Hope you don't get herself killed tryin' to catch the bastards." With that Edith stepped inside the house and coughed again.

Jeanita said very little in the carriage ride back to the Border house. Maddie was deep in thought of things to come and full of reflection about the introduction to whores that could help her see justice for her mother and the other passengers on board that train last winter. Especially the poor boy whose shirt she wore back then. Maddie replayed the conversations on the front porch over and over again inside her head. Her curiosity is aroused by the bond that

was so apparent between Jeanita and Rose and wonders what it was built upon, but doesn't dare ask about it. That would just be impolite. She hoped that Rose could become her friend too, but knew that she made it perfectly clear that this was business.

"Meeting Rose and Edith today was certainly an eye-opening experience," Maddie said, breaking the silence.

"People become hardened by life but in the end, we are all just people trying to stay alive," Jeanita quietly said. She studied Maddie's profile as she looked ahead guiding the carriage horse along the dusty road. She gently pushed back a damp tendril of Maddie's hair that had fallen across her cheek, then touched her shoulder. "I hope you don't think bad of me, having exposed you to whores and my past."

"No. Not at all. I think quite fondly of you. I am so glad you have connected me to them and helped me in the ways that you have. I hate to admit it but I feel more alive here in Bear Gulch than I ever did in Chicago. Because of this whole experience and my friendship with you, I've learned so much about myself and who I really am. You have helped me in my awakening."

Jeanita smiled to herself and peeled off her lacy white gloves. "Thank you, Maddie," Jeanita said, and sat quietly the rest of the way home.



## Chapter Seven

### The Lakota

Maddie arrived early at the livery. She knew it would be a while before Rose met her at seven, but her excitement couldn't keep her in the house any longer. She looks through the barn doors and sees a man mount a chestnut and watched as Mr. Whitman counted the money the rider handed him. The handsome rider tipped his hat to Maddie as he passed by. She watched him ride toward the rail station when suddenly she heard someone call her name from within the barn. Rose led a Dapple-gray mare through the center aisle and joined Maddie on the street.

"You're here early," Maddie said.

"So are you." Rose swung up in the saddle wearing elk hide trousers and boots.

Maddie was glad she wasn't wearing a dress and riding side saddle like she had imagined Rose might. Even though she was a whore, Maddie thought Rose to be very lady like in her appearance even if she was a little coarse in behavior and conversation. She was also impressed by the fact that

she carried a pistol on her side. Maddie felt secure on the plains by herself but even more so with Rose alongside of her.

Rose kicked the Dapple and said, "We'd better get started." Together they rode toward a familiar destination. Familiar to Maddie because she had just traveled the same route to the village a couple days earlier. To Rose it was very familiar. Every summer she makes the journey to visit her mother.

An hour had passed with scarcely a word from Rose and Maddie wasn't sure how to start a conversation with her that might begin to cement a friendship. Everything she wanted to ask about was too personal it seemed. She wanted to know more about her bond with Jeanita and how she truly felt about whoreing as a way of life. She couldn't think of anything to cut through the silence that wouldn't be offensive. They already talked about the possibility of weather coming their way but it might be worth noting the darkening sky and the cool breeze that now blew across their faces. A rumble of thunder to the west threatened as the breeze bent the tall grasses over to the ground.

A flash of lightening was followed by another wave of thunder that rolled across the sky.

"It'll be on top of us soon," Rose said looking into the sky. Before Maddie could answer, Rose turned the Dapple and galloped toward a small rolling hill. Maddie turned Jangles and followed, not knowing where Rose was leading them. By the time she crested the hill, she saw Rose riding toward an abandoned homestead. It was nothing more than a dilapidated cabin with a lean-to shed beside it that had



served its purpose long ago. As she got closer she saw that a small stream flowed beside it and figured that someone in the past had looked upon this place as the perfect spot to call home.

Maddie rode up to the lean-to where Rose was already taking the saddle from the dapple's back and she did the same for Jangles. She watched as Rose carried a dirt covered bucket to the stream and dipped it into the water. Maddie saw another and followed her.

Rose looked up when Maddie bent down beside her. Another bolt of lightning ripped across the sky and the thunder boomed over their heads. The wind began to blow and the first drops of rain began to fall.

"It's coming through really fast. It might get pretty bad but could blow over soon. Hard to tell," Rose said as though she were speaking from experience.

The rain began to pour and stung their faces as they carried the buckets up to the horses. Rose walked with a quick stride to the cabin with Maddie right behind her. The door was hanging from a single hinge at the bottom and Maddie wondered if it was safe to go inside but Rose had already pushed her way in. She followed her lead and stepped through the door.

Rose took one of the old chairs at the table leaving one other for Maddie. She looked around the one room cabin and except for an old pot near a wood burning stove, the wobbly table where they sat and a dust covered bunk against the far wall, it left no clues about the lives spent here before. Maddie watched with fascination as Rose rolled a cigarette with expertise and struck a match on the wooden table top. She squinted her eyes, taking the smoke

into her mouth and Maddie watched the smoke from the burning end, snake its way around her fingers like a serpent in a fruit tree. The rain pounded the roof and water seemed to leak in wherever it wanted to.

To Maddie it was sad that someone's home was now a derelict sore on the landscape of the plains. She was snapped back into the moment when Rose stood up and dropped her trousers, squatting over the pot near the stove. Maddie was embarrassed but awed by Rose's bold and unapologetic ways. She turned her head to look away.

"What, never seen nobody piss before?"

"Well, not that I can recall," Maddie said with a timid smile.

Rose threw her head back and laughed. Even her laugh is beautiful, Maddie thought. Rose shook her head and looked at Maddie with mischief on her face. With nothing else to do, she wanted to see if she could ruffle Maddie's feathers a bit.

"You say you're from Chicago, what's it like there?"

"It's very different than out here. The whole town of Bear Gulch is barely the size of a neighborhood there," said Maddie.

"It was pretty fancy where you lived?"

"I guess you could say it was. Yes, compared to out here it was sophisticated and modern. Very nice restaurants, theater, the best hotels and schools," Maddie recalled with bittersweet remembrance.

"I'd bet it's a great place to be a whore. With that many men around and all. A good lookin' girl could make a lot of money in a place like that," Rose said.

"I would imagine so," Maddie replied. She felt a little uncomfortable with the conversation but wanted to let it continue, hoping she could get a few questions answered too. Maddie swallowed hard and pushed open a new door. "You must like being a whore."

"I do."

"Is it the money?"

Rose carefully laid tobacco in a paper and began twisting it up. Rose licked it with her tongue and said, "The money is good, yes. Mostly I like controlling them."

Maddie was confused and asked, "Controlling them?"

Rose said, "They come in all liquored up and half hard before they say hello. It doesn't take much to work them up to the point you can empty their pockets of whatever you want."

Maddie was engrossed in what Rose had to say and impatiently waited as she struck a match and slowly inhaled the smoke from her cigarette. Rose held the cigarette out to Maddie. "Would you like to try one?"

"No thank you." Maddie was tempted by it though.

She didn't really want it, but didn't want to seem like a child or prudish. She reached for it saying, "Sure, I'll try it."

Rose watched her closely as she held the cigarette to her lips and inhaled. She expected her to cough, which would have been good for a laugh, but she didn't. Maddie hadn't told her that Daddy let her puff on his cigars whenever Mother wasn't near. Daddy got the laughs from her first smoke.

Rose asked Maddie, "Ever have a boy between your legs?"

"I'm sorry but that's not any of your business."

Rose laughed saying, "Then the answer is no."

Maddie defiantly said, "If there had been, I wouldn't say so anyway."

Rose leaned across the table and said, "You had no problem asking me if I liked laying on my back for money!"

Maddie admitted to herself that it was a fair question after all. "You're right. Nobody ever laid between my legs."

"Have you ever kissed anyone?"

Maddie thought about it and said, "So far, just one boy."

Rose perked up and asked, "Did he like it?"

"He never knew it happened. He was dead."

The rain came to a sudden stop and the swiftly moving clouds moved on to the east letting the sun blaze down on the tall lush grasses that covered the plains for as far as she could see.

Rose stood and said, "We need to move."

They rode for two hours and Maddie knew it was getting late in the morning with the sun almost overhead.

"Just over this next hill," Rose said and Maddie noticed a change in her voice and demeanor. She thought Rose looked tense and apprehensive. Perhaps she was rethinking her decision to bring a white girl into the village. Maybe the money she was paying Rose, clouded her better judgement.

They stopped at the top of the hill and looked down upon the village.

"Wait here. I'll be back if they don't want you down there, but I'll still find out what I can about the hunter you

are looking for,” Rose said. Maddie’s disappointment couldn’t be hidden.

Rose continued, “If you are welcomed, I will wave you in.”

Maddie watched Rose ride down the sloping hill to the Village and saw her disappear among her people in the Tipi covered village.

With nothing to do but wait, Maddie tries to count Tipi. After reaching eighty-six, she tries guessing the number of villagers. Time seemed to stand still and her spirit dampened when she saw Rose returning.

“They are having ceremonies tonight at dusk and don’t want any outsiders to witness it. They are very strict about these things. They know you are here and why. They tell me his name is Enapay. It means, appears bravely. The ceremonies will last two nights and my mother will send him to the cabin on the third day. He has the elder’s approval. We can talk to him then.”

Maddie considers what Rose has told her and has no other option but to go to the cabin and wait on the third day.

“It will cost you another night’s pay,” Rose said, and kicked the Dapple toward Bear Gulch.

Maddie rode up beside her and added, “Another day’s rent to the livery too.” By Maddie’s calculations it would end up costing close to a hundred dollars just to talk to the hunter, and that was no guarantee he would help her bring the horsemen to justice. More important than that she wondered if he would fan the flames that smoldered inside her or put them out once and for all.

Jeanita watched from the kitchen windows as Maddie turned Jangles into the carriage house lot for the night.

Maddie walked toward the back door that Jeanita held open to her.

She looked over her shoulder so that she wasn't overheard as she said, "Mr. Border is home in the study. I told him you were out for a ride and that's all."

"Thank you, Jeanita."

Jeanita was anxious to know how it went and asked, "Did you get to see the hunter?"

"No. Rose set it up for day after tomorrow. Something about tribal ceremonies kept us from seeing him today."

"That's too bad. Now you have to make another trip out there," Jeanita said.

"And, I have to pay Rose another day's pay to go with me."

Having said that, Maddie cranked the handle of the pump in the kitchen and scrubbed the dust from her neck and face with her hands. Jeanita stood ready with a hand towel.

She dried her face, wiped her neck and announced, "I'm going to go say hello to Daddy."

Jeanita sat down and wondered if Rose was just taking advantage of Maddie because she knew she was from a wealthy home or if she was jealous of Maddie's friendship with her. She knew Rose could be difficult at times.

Maybe this time will be different. Long ago a woman who found common ground with her, had to leave because of Rose's jealous outbursts. She threatened to beat the poor woman if she tried to get between them. Rose scared her away and apologized later explaining that she didn't want to lose her friend to anyone, ever. Jeanita knew Rose to be sweet and caring but always tread lightly with her words to



avoid the darkness that could overcome her in the flash of an eye.

Maddie tossed and turned all night and spent the next day idly waiting for the night to arrive again, only to fitfully doze some more before that day finally arrived.

She was weary and tired but gave up on rest and dressed before going out to the carriage house. "Jangles, we are going for a ride and at last we get to see the Lakota hunter, Enapay."

When Maddie arrived at the livery, Rose was waiting in the saddle. She looked tiny on the back of an enormous Sorrel that appeared to have seen better days.

"This was all that was left," Rose said and turned the big horse onto the dirt street.

"Do you think he'll make it the whole way?"

Rose looked at Maddie and shrugged her shoulders. "If he doesn't, we'll both be ridin' yours," She said.

The sky was blue without a cloud to be seen anywhere and yet it was cooler than usual. It made for an easy comfortable ride. Conversation was scarce but that was fine with Maddie. She didn't want anything to shatter the dreamy state of mind she was in. Maybe it was the lack of sleep that was causing the euphoric wave over her, she wasn't sure. The time and miles went by without a notice from her and she was surprised when they reached the cabin. She looked for the hunter but didn't see any sign of him or his pony.

"Rose, what if he doesn't come?"

“He will,” She said.

“Do you have any more tobacco, Rose?” asked Maddie.  
“I do.”

“I’d like to smoke if you can spare it,” Maddie said trying to appear more earthy, hoping it would appeal to Rose somehow. What appealed to her was the opportunity to present a challenge.

“Yeah, but you have to roll it up yourself.” Rose tossed the bag of tobacco and paper to Maddie. Rose pretended not to watch as Maddie struggled with the task.

Maddie hoped that Rose wasn’t watching when the tobacco fell from the ends of the paper that wouldn’t cooperate in the rolling around it part of the tricky operation. Rose had seen enough.

“Look. Wet the tips of your fingers so the paper doesn’t slide. It will make it a lot easier and don’t just throw a big wad on the paper and expect it to come out right. You have to fold the paper to make a trough and lay it in there.”

Maddie followed her instructions then wet her fingertips with her tongue. She smiled as the paper rolled around the tobacco and even though it didn’t look as tidy as Rose’s, it still would be considered smokable.

“There you go,” Rose said enthusiastically with a beautiful smile on her face. “Now, let’s see if you can get it lit.” Suddenly, she stood and drew her gun.

Maddie quietly said, “Maybe it’s Enapay.” Rose moved to the cabin door to peek outside. Maddie slid into place on the other side of the door with her pistol ready.

A voice called out, “Chumani”

Maddie asked, “What did he say?”

Rose put her gun back in her holster and said, "Chumani. He's calling my name." She stepped through the door.

Maddie took a deep breath and followed her out to the lean-to where Enapay stood next to Jangles. He looked past Rose to Maddie and she thought she saw the faintest of smile. Even if it was just for a second, she was sure it was there.

Maddie felt helpless as they spoke to one another as Lakota of the Sioux Nation.

Rose faced Maddie and said, "He said he knew it would be you when MaKawee, my mother, asked him to come."

Maddie smiled graciously at him. He began to speak again to Rose and Maddie excitedly waited to hear what he had to say. Rose turned to Maddie and considered how to best explain what the Lakota, Enapay, expressed to her. "He says that he often wondered whatever became of you and admired your ability to endure such tragedy and loss. He said he watched you suffer the cold and hunger while grieving something he was unaware of at the time. He helped you on the prairie because even though you are a warrior spirit, that spirit was injured and it is his duty to help a stranger in need. He did not kill the white men that attacked you out of anger, it was only to allow you to suffer less and live. He hopes that your need to find these men is not for revenge because that is a victory that will eat at your heart, but to find them and keep them from hurting other innocents is an honorable journey. He said that MaKawee told him what she knew from me about your mother and the others on the train. He will speak for you if it must be."

“Rose, please tell him that I am very grateful for everything he did to protect and care for me last winter.”

Rose spoke to Enapay as a Lakota, telling him of Maddie’s gratitude. He openly smiled and pointed to Jangles.

Rose smiled and said to Maddie, “He’s happy to see you are reunited with your horse.”

Maddie nods her head to Enapay and lays her hand across her heart. Rose said to Maddie, “He wants to know if you are a better rider now. I think he is teasing you.” Rose raises her eyebrows and quietly adds, “That might be a sign that he likes you.”

Maddie walked past them both and took Jangles saddle off of his back and then she slipped the bridle down his nose and draped it across the fence rail. She quickly pulled herself up on his back and galloped away with free rein, moving as one. Enapay knew she was not demonstrating complete control but true communication and was awed by her skill. She rode back to them and slid down Jangles side, confident that she had shown her competency. Enapay nodded his head, yes over and over again. He jumped onto his pony and after wishing Rose and Maddie well, rode up the hill and disappeared over the crest.

“There you go Maddie; you got the meeting you wanted and forged an alliance. It’s time to get going and don’t forget, you owe me another night’s pay,” Rose said as she mounted the big old Sorrell.

Maddie reflected the day in her mind as they rode to Bear Gulch and remembered Rose’s Lakota name. “Your name Chumani is beautiful. What does it mean?”

Rose lets go of a sigh and maybe something from her past saying, "Dewdrops, it means dewdrops."

She thought about her own name and could find no meaningful value in it at all. She let go of that thought long enough to indulge herself with romantic fancy. The glow his faint smile brought to her earlier returned, recalling his chiseled handsome features and piercing black eyes. His smooth muscular body moving with masculine purpose, yet with grace she had seen in dancers on the stage back in Chicago. Maddie wondered if Enapay liked her too.

She was ripped into the present when Rose's voice cut into her wandering thoughts. "So, you need to bring one hundred and three dollars tomorrow out to the house where I work."

"I'll bring your money tomorrow morning, Rose."

"Not too early. I will probably get some work tonight," Rose said.

Maddie thought it odd that she would call it work. Maybe it was easier to live with that way. She looked over at her and wondered if she feels shame for what she does for money. Maybe the feelings of shame are easier to live with than being pushed out from your homeland by your tribe because you're only half Lakota. She remembered that Jeanita had told her that Indian whores earned much less than the white girls. Too white to stay in the village and too Indian to be worth much in the whorehouse. Either way, Maddie knows this woman lives rejected, abandoned and disrespected wherever she turns. If she were living in Chicago, she could hold her head high and be whoever she wanted to be, with respect, and admired for the beauty she

truly is. Chicago however, is a world away from the plains,  
Maddie sadly remembered.



## Chapter Eight

### Business

Maddie steps inside the bank and listens to her father's voice spilling from his office. He sounds jovial and in good spirit, much to her relief. Daddy is very generous with Maddie, providing there is good reason for her sometimes unusual expenditures. This is quite different. She isn't sure how she will approach needing over one hundred dollars for a whore. He steps out of his office and slaps the back of a handsome young business man in a brown pinstripe suit. The man shakes father's hand vigorously, then Mr. Border sends him off with a big smile.

"Hello, Maddie. What brings you in to the office today?"

Maddie smiled and said, "Just wanted stop in to see you for a few minutes and make a small request."

Maddie's father ushers her into his office with a broad wave of his hand. Maddie enters the neatly kept office space and takes a seat across his desk as he settles in behind it.

"What can I do for you, young lady," he asks.

“Well, I need one hundred dollars to pay for scouting and translation services that were necessary to find and communicate with the Lakota tribe.” Before he could ask why she needed a scout and translator she asked, “Did you know that the Lakota are one of the tribes of the Sioux Nation?”

“Yes, I did. What I don’t know is why you needed to find them and have a translator communicate something to them. I know you have a good reason but, young lady that is a lot of money and it doesn’t grow on trees, my dear.”

Maddie took her time and with slow, deliberate speech said, “Do you remember last winter I told you of a Lakota hunter who came to my rescue more than once and brought Jangles to me when I was all alone out there?”

“Yes, I remember.”

“I wanted to find him and thank him for everything he did for me and to let him know how grateful I am, we both are, for the kindness and care he offered me. Without him, I could have died too. I don’t know the language so I needed a translator. They are a nomadic tribe, making it necessary to employ a scout to help me find them.”

“I’m beginning to see,” he said.

“I wasn’t trying to be frivolous and I know money doesn’t grow on trees, but this was important.”

“I’m sure it was and I understand completely your desire to do the right thing,” her father said. He took his wallet from his breast pocket and thumbed through his cash.

He continued, “Next time, discuss your plans for my money beforehand.”

Maddie smiled and said, "Thank you Daddy." With that she came around his desk and threw her arms around his neck and kissed the top of his head.

"I won't be home for dinner, Maddie. I have an important meeting to attend. Please tell Jeanita for me."

"I will," she said. Relieved at the outcome, she hurried out of the bank.

"Jangles old pal, let's get to the whorehouse." She climbed onto his back, and urged him up the street.

Edith watched Maddie from the front porch as she rode up to the beat-up old house of ill repute. Maddie stepped up on the porch.

Edith said, "She should be comin' down any minute now. Just finishing up a little business."

"Good morning, Edith. I have a little business with Rose myself," Maddie said.

Edith coughed and threw down what was left of her cigarette and said, "She told me to keep an eye out for you." Edith stood and yelled through the open door, "Rose, yer girl is out here."

A moment passed and a starry-eyed young miner stepped out with a boyish grin plastered across his face. Rose stepped out behind him in a long night gown that clung everywhere it should have, giving her a very sultry appearance. Maddie was taken back by this side of Rose she hadn't seen before. Even with her hair out of place from recent events, she was stunning.

"Listen lover, I'm going to want to see you again next time you get up this way," Rose said with a sexy lilt in her voice. She stepped up close to him and kissed his cheek.

"You know I will, Miss Rose," he said.

"A good man like you is hard to find, remember that now. I'll see you when you get paid again and we'll have a real nice time," she said.

Maddie was speechless and awed by the power Rose had over this little man. He stepped backward off the porch, savoring his last view of Rose and Maddie wondered if she would be on his mind all week as he broke his back working the mines.

In a flash her demeanor changed along with her voice as she quickly turned facing Maddie. "You got my money?"

"Yes, it is right here," she said. She couldn't think of another thing to say. Still spellbound herself by this amazing transformation, she felt as tongue-tied as the young miner who probably spent his entire pay on one night with the exotic Miss Rose. She held the cash out for Rose who took it without counting, and stuffed it next to her breast.

Maddie stood staring and Rose gave her a questioning look before asking, "Is there something else I can do for you?"

"No, not that I can think of at the moment."

"Well then, Good day." Rose disappeared into the house without another word.

Maddie suddenly felt foolish, as if she had been used like any one of Rose's other visitors. She mounted Jangles and started for home feeling somewhat abandoned even though she knew from the beginning that it was just business for Rose. Maddie wanted more and hoped that they were forging a friendship from something they shared out on the prairie but it was obvious to her now that that something

was just money. Maddie knew she shouldn't feel hurt by it but she felt the sting all the same.

She put Jangles in his stall and walked toward the back of the Border home. Jeanita met her at the door. She could sense that something was bothering Maddie when she brushed past her without a word.

Without looking up at Jeanita Maddie said, "Mr. Border won't be home for dinner this evening." On her way to the stairway in the foyer she continued, "I will require nothing as well."

Jeanita was confused by the change in her. Maddie was always friendly and couldn't wait to share the days experiences with her. What could have happened that caused her to be aloof and distant toward her? Jeanita tapped on Maddie's bedroom door lightly.

"What do you want?"

"Can I fix you something for lunch?"

"No."

"Do you feel alright," Jeanita asked.

"Yes. I'm fine."

"If you are sure," she said and started to walk down the hallway.

Maddie's door opened and she asked, "Jeanita, do you pretend to be my friend because Father pays you?"

"No, what makes you ask such a thing?"

"Isn't that the way it is with whores, friendship for money?"

Jeanita moves toward Maddie. "What happened? Tell me."

“Rose. As soon as I paid her, she dismissed me like the customer she sent down the street just a moment before. I thought we were going to be friends but for her it was just business.”

“Maddie, Miss Border, if Rose liked you, she wouldn’t show it this soon. You don’t really even know her and she doesn’t know you either. It takes her a long while to trust. You have no idea what she has gone through her whole life. She doesn’t want to be hurt any more than she already has been and won’t allow herself to be set up for a big fall. It’s not you, it’s her.”

Maddie’s eyes are red from tears.

Jeanita took Maddie’s hands in hers and said, “I am your friend because I want to be. Now, how about something to eat?”

At the small table in the kitchen, Maddie pokes at green beans nestled next to a slice of turkey breast buried under gravy.

“How did you meet Rose?” Jeanita poured a glass of water from a pitcher for Maddie and sat down across from her.

“We met in Deadwood. I had been at the theatre on the second floor in the Badlands district of Main Street for a long time. As you know, I was owned by Lillian Majors, and I couldn’t leave there until I had the money to pay her the price she had laid out to purchase me years before. Time went by slowly then one day this sad eyed, innocent, very hungry young girl came begging to work. Lillian took one look at her and knew there was a small fortune to be made.”

Maddie asked, “Was it Rose?”

“Yes,” Jeanita said.



“When you say theatre, are you talking about the whorehouse,” Maddie asked.

“Yes. It was a dancehall on the main floor and rooms on the second.”

“Was it the only place a girl could work,” Maddie asked with great curiosity.

“Oh no. There were at least eight houses that I know of on that end of Main Street.”

“How old was she?”

“Thirteen and about as pretty a child as you ever saw,” Jeanita said.

“How did you and Rose become close?”

“There was a man who spent a lot of money for Rose and when she couldn’t swallow him, he beat her face black and blue. Lillian didn’t do anything about it because the man spent a lot of money in her house and she cared a lot more for money than she did a half breed whore. Rose healed up and he came back again. She couldn’t do what he wanted and he ended up breaking her arm. Lillian took her to the Doctor and he gave her morphine and sent her back to the house. Several more times the rich man came back and every time he insisted on having Rose. She was at the Doctor’s place so often she got hooked on morphine for the pain and opium just to get by. One night she knew he was coming and loaded herself up with drugs to get through it but she took too much and passed out. He was furious and beat the living hell out of her. I had seen enough and told him I would do what he wanted for free if he would just let her be. I knelt down in front of him and she came to and saw what I was doing in her place. When he was done, he

put on his pants and left. Rose broke down and sobbed in my arms.”

Astonished by Jeanita’s story, Maddie asked, “What did you do?”

“I held her in my arms all night and let her cry it all out.”

“So, you were friends for a long time then?”

“A couple years maybe. Then she left and came here to Bear Gulch. I think it was so she could be closer to her mother, MaKawee. She did come to visit me once, about a year ago to tell me there was a new bank opening in Bear Gulch, so I came to ask for a loan to buy my freedom and you know the rest.”

Maddie sat quietly for a few minutes then pushed the half-eaten plate away. “It’s all making sense now.”

Jeanita asks, “How about a slice of pie?” Maddie smiles. Jeanita got down a saucer and cut into a strawberry pie that was sitting on the cupboard.

“What was it like,” Maddie asked.

“What was what like?”

“You know, being a whore,” Maddie said timidly.

“Why so many questions about all that?”

“I don’t know. I know you had to do it because you were bought and paid for, but did you ever just do it because you wanted to, because you really loved someone?”

Jeanita thought about it for a moment and slid the pie across the table to Maddie. “No, I never loved anyone and I don’t remember the faces of any of the men I whored with. I never actually looked at them. They repulsed me in every way,” She said.

Maddie asked, “You don’t remember any of them?”

Jeanita said," Well yes. There was one in particular you may have even heard of yourself. Wild Bill Hickok."

"The famous gunfighter?"

Jeanita laughed. "He wasn't no gunfighter by the time he got around to me. He was nearly forty, balding and he wore spectacles. Came to Deadwood Gulch for the mines but never did much mining. He spent all of his time gambling and buying time with whores. I don't think he was ever sober and mostly lived off his reputation. Wasn't that good a gambler either and had a willy about the size of my thumb." Jeanita laughed again and said, "I was with him the night before he got killed in Nuttall and Mann's Saloon by Jack McCall."

Maddie shook her head and said, "It surely is a wild territory."

Jeanita agreed saying, "It certainly is. You would be much better off back in Chicago."

"Maybe one of these days I can move back. I think you might like it there too." Maddie finished off the crust of her pie and pushed away from the table. "I'm going out for a ride and do some shooting. I need all the practice I can get to survive in this crazy lawless place," she said.



## Chapter Nine

### Settling the Debt

Maddie rode Jangles onto the main street intending to stop at the mercantile to pick up extra bullets when she noticed a very luxurious and expensive looking private car at the railroad station. This was something Maddie didn't see every day and wanted to know more about it.

Curiosity set in and she rode on to the station, taking a seat on a bench just outside the entrance. Knowing that whoever it belonged to, might pass through the station doors or step out of the car. Whoever it belongs to must be pretty important she thought. Maybe it's someone Daddy is doing business with. She didn't have to wait long before two beautifully dressed women stepped out with a short bald man that looked to be in his fifty's. Maddie recognized the man's suit as similar to those her Father had tailored in Chicago on Michigan Street. After close examination of the women's headwear and shoes, she knew this group was definitely from Chicago, but why were they here she wondered.

When the engineer stepped down from the train, Maddie recognized him as the one that she rode with in the engine to Bear Gulch. She gets up from the bench and walks up to him.

"Hello, do you remember me? You found me in the snow after the train robbery last winter," she said.

The engineer looked at her a second and said, "Yes I do. I'm so sorry about your mother. I hope things are going well for you now."

"They are much better."

He asked, "What brings you to the station?"

Maddie cocked her head and with an inquisitive tone said, "I saw the fancy car roll in and wondered who could be on board and why they would get off in Bear Gulch. Do you know?"

The engineer looked around to be certain no one could overhear him as he stepped up close to her. "Pinkerton Security. The railroad hired them to stop the robberies."

"Robberies, are you saying there have been others since the one that killed my mother?"

"Four in the last three months. They've made off with a fortune in gold shipments and the greedy thieves robbed the passengers too," the engineer said.

"The same way they robbed us. Did they kill any of the passengers?"

"Yes, but only two. Most of the passengers were cooperative and gave up their possessions without a fight."

"Do they think it was the same men," she asked.

"They have their suspicions," he said.



The Pinkerton Security Agents boarded a wagon with their trunks and rolled up the main street toward the hotel.

The engineer tipped his hat and said, "Nice to see you again. Good day Ma'am." He turned and climbed into the engine.

The whistle blew and the steamer slowly began to roll out of the station, leaving Maddie to ponder this new development. She rode out to the pine covered hills, searching for a place to work on her aim with the Winchester but it was hard to focus with so many unanswered questions. Why two women? Are they the security, or maybe they are recruiters for local hires? Could it be that they are sharpshooters that pose as passengers? Women can shoot. Maddie knew that to be true because by now she was near expert. She was determined to learn more about these Pinkerton people.

Maddie wondered about it all afternoon while shooting at random targets. She figured she had blown off enough dead branches for the day and ached for a moving target to challenge her skills. She mounted Jangles and headed for home.

Jangles carried Maddie through the center of Main Street and she slowed him as she gazed through the windows of the hotel lobby, hoping to catch a glimpse of the visitors inside. She was disappointed to find it deserted. Maddie pressed on toward home wondering what seeing them would have accomplished anyway. She looked up at the front door to Daddy's bank as she did every time she went by and to her surprise, the Pinkerton Agents stepped out and onto the street. She looked back over her shoulder to

see them walking toward the hotel. For Maddie, this was very exciting.

She couldn't wait to talk to Daddy. "He'll know something about all this."

The mantle clock in Daddy's study chimed at seven o'clock, sending Maddie hurriedly to the front door. She pulled back the sheer window cover and peered up the street, knowing he should be home soon. Seeing no one, she opened the door and stepped out onto the large porch. Still her view was not to her satisfaction. Quickly she moved down the steps and brick walkway to the street. A delivery wagon waiting down the street was blocking her line of sight. Maddie opened the black iron gate and proceeded to walk up the street. She smiled and sped her gait when she finally saw his familiar figure walking toward her.

"I saw the Pinkerton Security agents come out of your bank today. What were they doing there," she gushed in a single breath?

"How did you know they were from Pinkerton's," he asked.

"I saw them arrive at the station in their private car and the train engineer told me who they were," she said.

"Well, they wanted to talk to me concerning the robbery you and Mother were witness to and of course they knew your Mother's fate, but would like to talk to you about what you remember," said Mr. Border. He swung the gate open for Maddie and said, "They will be coming to the house in the morning at approximately nine o'clock. I assume you are interested in speaking with them."

Maddie saw flashes of that horrible day burst open in her head as she suddenly recalled in great detail the entire

sequence of events. "Of course, Father. These men have to be stopped. The engineer told me that the robberies are becoming commonplace with four over the past three months alone."

Laying in her bed in the dark, Maddie clearly remembers the red-haired man with scruffy beard, puffy cheeks and light blue eyes. With her memory refreshed after seeing him outside the saloon, she will never forget the face of the man whose one fatal shot at point blank range, took the life of her innocent mother in nothing short of murder. In a territory with no law and little justice, there is no moral struggle within her. When she finds him again, she will be ready and committed to serve justice on him herself. If it means he dies from her Winchester or up close in a battle with pistols, she will see it through to the end. Maddie rolls over and drifts off to sleep.

Maddie comes down the stairs and is greeted by the smell of bacon frying and the sounds of plates being set out upon the kitchen table. Maddie takes a seat across from her Father.

"Good morning sweetheart," he says. He sips his coffee and looks over Maddie's clothes. "Aren't you going to dress like a young lady for the Pinkerton group," Daddy asks.

"No."

"Why not?"

"I have chores to do and I can't be bothered with dressing twice."

Father briefly looks stern and asks, "Don't you think that your choice of clothing reflects poorly on our family?"

"I'm not interested in making a good or bad impression on them. I'm only interested in giving them the information they ask for."

Jeanita sets a platter with eggs and bacon in the center of the table. "Good-morning, Miss Border," she said with a wink and a smile.

Jeanita understands and agrees with me, Maddie thought, and was curious as to what makes her so cheery this morning. Her step was light and she looked refreshed, as though good fortune dropped into her lap.

Maddie finished her breakfast and laid down her napkin. "Going out to feed and water the horses."

"No need Miss Border, it's been done," Jeanita said.

"Well, the stalls need picking," Maddie said and pushed away from the table.

Mr. Border looked up from his eggs, "Remember Madison, the Pinkerton's will be here at nine sharp."

"I know Daddy. I'll be in before then."

Maddie patted Jangles on the neck and watched his jaw flex as he munched on hay put in for him by Jeanita.

"Let's go outside, Arrabelle," she said to the carriage horse and led her out of the carriage house.

When she returned, she climbed the ladder to the loft for straw and found a half empty whiskey bottle and a blanket tucked away in the corner. Why was it up here and with who, she wondered. Jeanita would know the answer Maddie is sure, but she decides to let it be. After all, she's entitled to privacy in her off hours just like everyone else, but she is certain it has something to do with Jeanita's cheery disposition this morning.

The knock on the front door at 9:00 A.M. was met by Jeanita who ushered the Pinkerton trio into Mr. Border's study. Maddie took her time with an entrance that included a stop in the kitchen for a long cool drink of water. Maddie entered the study to find the two women sitting in chairs father had arranged by the window with a small table between them that held an embroidered doily with a house plant resting perfectly centered on top of it. The man, wearing the same brown suit he wore the day before, stood nearby.

He stepped up to Maddie and thrust his hand toward her. "Good Morning, you must be Madison Border."

Maddie noticed the women looking her over, obviously not expecting her to be dressed as a man. Maddie said, "Yes, I am Maddie Border."

The two women stand to be introduced. "My name is Jeffery Winters. I am a lead detective with the Pinkerton Agency of Chicago and these ladies, Elise Mitchell and Polly Jameson, are investigators with the agency as well," he said.

Maddie wanted to stay in control of the interview and said, "Please be seated, coffee or tea will be served momentarily." Maddie then stepped behind her Father's desk and sat in his chair, giving her a feeling of power and authority, she didn't know came with this particular setting.

Jeanita appeared at the door and quietly entered pushing a small service cart to the inside wall and left.

"Coffee anyone," Maddie asked.

Only Polly Jameson stood and poured from the silver pot, making herself quite comfortable. Polly was obviously the least experienced agent, looking to be barely twenty-two

years old, according to Maddie's assessment. A strawberry blonde with youthful features and freckles across her tiny nose. Mr. Winters patiently waited for her return to her seat, while Elise Mitchell issued a stern expression directed at Polly. Maddie quickly decided she didn't care for Elise and defused the situation by pouring coffee for herself as well. She had had her fill for the day but felt the young Polly hadn't done anything out of line to receive admonishment from her supervisor. Maybe in their professional surroundings with a client, but not in her home when all they really want is an account of what happened and probably descriptions of the thieves.

Mr. Winters asked most of the questions with Miss Mitchell making notes as Polly took to doing the same.

"Maddie, may I call you Maddie," he asked.

"Yes, of course," she said.

Mr. Winters said, "Your account is vivid and your descriptions of the offenders is remarkable. May we call on you if we think of anything else?"

"I would be happy to help in any way I can," said Maddie.

Miss Mitchell was the first to stand with Polly following her lead as any upstart would.

"We appreciate your time, Miss Border," said Mr. Winters.

Polly smiled very large and with possibly over exuberance said, "Really pleased to meet you."

"Good day, Maddie," Miss Mitchell off handedly said over her shoulder on her way out.

Walking up the street, Miss Mitchell said to Mr. Winters, "Something strange in that girl's behavior."



Mr. Winters stopped and asked, "How so?"

"She dressed like a man working in the mines and had a six-gun strapped around her at nine o'clock in the morning, in her own home. Quite the contrast from her father."

Polly walked along behind. "I liked her. She's different," Polly said with a giggle.

Mr. Winters responded, "I did too, Polly. Yes, she dressed differently and it is true she is in contrast with her father's appearance, but that is not a behavior trait, just a choice."

"A six gun, Jeffery, a six gun," Elise said emphatically.

"I'm sure she has her reasons," Mr. Winters added with a note of finality.

Maddie wandered to the kitchen in hopes that Jeanita might volunteer to let her in on why there was whiskey and a blanket in the carriage house. She heard voices outside the back door and peered out to find Jeanita standing by the trellis, talking to Rose. Jeanita turned and hurriedly came to the house after Rose quickly walked away.

Jeanita said, "Rose was just here. Somebody beat up Edith last night pretty bad. I'm going to see if there is anything I can do to help."

"I'll get the carriage. I'm going with you," Maddie said.

When they arrived, Rose was holding a wet towel to the back of Edith's head. She was hard to recognize with her face bruised and swollen. "Do you know who it was," asked Jeanita as she examined the gash on the back of her head.

"He's been here before. Asked for Rose but she weren't here so I gave him a ride." Edith said through blood covered teeth.

Maddie thought that didn't sound like Rose to miss an opportunity to work unless she was busy earning money somewhere else.

"What did he look like," Rose asked.

"He's that fella with the red hair and blue eyes. That chubby faced guy."

"Tom. He goes by Tom," Rose said.

Maddie was interested to know if the man Edith described, was the same man that killed her mother. Maddie asked, "Did he come here alone?"

Edith said, holding a split lip, "No, he came with some other fellers. Don't know them. Never saw them before. Sally was the only other girl here and there was four other guys with this feller and they all wanted to ride for the price of one. I said hell no, and that's when it got bad. Sally got scared and did two of them for nothin' but I wasn't about to."

"Do you know where they went when they left," Jeanita asked.

"Jus' said somethin' bout catchin' a train is all I know," Edith said reaching inside her mouth and spitting out a tooth. "Son's a bitches, now just look at that."

Maddie saddled Jangles and hung the Winchester on the side. She left him free of the bridle and rode to the hotel. Once inside the lobby she went to the desk and asked, "What room is Mr. Winters in."

"He's registered to rooms eight, nine and ten."

"Thank you," she said and went up the stairs to room eight and knocked on the door.

Elise Mitchell called out, "Who's there?"

“Maddie Border. I’m looking for Mr. Winters.” The door opened and Elise said, “He’s not in his room.”

“Do you know where he is then?”

“What is this about?”

“It’s about the next train robbery, I think it’s today,” Maddie said. She asked Elise again of his whereabouts.

“He’s at the train station.” Maddie turned to leave and Elise said, “I’m coming with you.”

Polly opened the door to her room and spun the chamber of a forty-five-caliber pistol and said, “Wait for me.”

Maddie didn’t answer. She mounted Jangles and quickly rode to the station.

By the time Polly and Elise arrived, Maddie had already told him what had happened to the good-natured whore Edith, who it might have been and what they could be up to.

“I don’t think there is anything of real value aboard the train that is due this afternoon. It just doesn’t seem likely to me that they would bother with it. If it is indeed the men you think they are,” said Jeffery Winters.

“That might not be something they are aware of, Mr. Winters. They wouldn’t have access to information regarding the contents of the cargo, would they?”

Looking perplexed by Maddie’s sound reasoning, Mr. Winters admitted, “No. I guess they wouldn’t.”

Maddie said, “I doubt that they have a real plan. I think for them, it is the luck of the draw. Maybe there is valuable cargo, maybe not. But there are always passengers’ valuables that keep it from becoming a wasted effort.”

Mr. Winters pulls Maddie off to the side. “Are you as good with those guns as I think you are?”

Maddie answers with a cold stare then says, "Just thought you might be interested in what I just told you. Do what you think is best, but I'm going to ride out to the hills where you can see a train coming for miles. There are a few good places to hold up and wait on it if you planned to rob it. I'll let you know if I see anything that looks like trouble."

"You shouldn't go alone. It could be dangerous," he said.

Maddie turned to face him and angrily said, "You just told me you didn't think anyone would bother with this one because there wasn't anything important riding on it. Well, Mr. Winters, all those passengers, people with names, just like my mother and everyone else who lost their lives in cold blooded murder are valuable and important enough for me." Maddie turned away and stepped out of the station.

"Polly, go with her," Mr. Winters said.

"I don't have a horse," said Polly.

Frustrated, he yelled, "Get one and follow her goddamnit!"

Maddie rode home and got her bed roll and leftover bread from the kitchen.

"When will you be back," Jeanita asked.

"I don't know, that's why I'm taking my bed roll. I might be gone a while. Tell Daddy I'm off on another adventure."

She went back out to the barn and hung a small grain bag over her saddle horn and headed to Main Street. Just as she rode past Whitman's Livery, Polly came out riding the Dapple Rose rented once before.

"Maddie," she shouted and rode up to her. Maddie looked her over, both surprised and annoyed to see her in riding pants and black boots to her knees. She was, however,

impressive with her forty-five hanging on her side as though it belonged there.

“Jeffery, I mean Mr. Winters sent me to go with you.”  
Maddie said, “Suit yourself, but try not to get us killed.”

Maddie turned Jangles up a pine covered hill where the railroad tracks lay below with a clear view to both the East and the West. Maddie got off her horse and examined fresh tracks.

“These hoof prints were made today and the horses are shod. The Indians don’t shoe their horses so these could belong to the men we are looking for,” said Maddie.

Polly pointed to the ground and said, “They lead this way. They are using the trees for cover.”

They stood still and listened for sounds of life. After a moment Maddie asked, “What’s your story?”

Polly looked confused by Maddie’s question.

“What I mean is, how did you become a Pinkerton’s Security agent,” Maddie said.

“I was traveling with the circus for a while and got tired of it. We were in Chicago; I saw an advertisement in the paper and went in to apply for the job. Jeffery interviewed me and asked what skills I would be bringing to the agency. I told him to come to the show that night at the stockyards and see for himself,” Polly said. Maddie was intrigued and asked her to go on.

She continued saying, “I was raised on a farm in Ohio with my older brothers. For fun we used to practice acrobatic tricks on the back of farm horses. I always loved to shoot guns. Spent hours at a time shooting at old bottles and canning jars. To me it was the best way in the world to

spend my time. Then I learned to ride standing up and shoot jars at a gallop. That's what got me in the circus and into Pinkerton's."

"A sharp shooting trick rider? You must be really good," Maddie said.

"I am."

"I'd like to see what you can do. I thought I was the only girl around who loved to shoot," Maddie said.

Polly said, "Soon enough, but not now. We can't draw attention to ourselves and catch train robbers at the same time."

"I didn't know they had women agents in security."

"They do. Kitty Warne was the first. Later she was in charge of a special corps of women agents."

"What did they do that was so special," Maddie asked, patting Jangles neck.

"Well, the theory is that women can gain the trust of men and women, easier than men can. Our training helps us to infiltrate groups and get people to talk so we can solve and complete our mission."

"It sounds exciting and dangerous," Maddie said with new admiration for the freckle nosed girl.

"It can be," said Polly.

In the distance the train rumbled toward them from the East. the two women mounted and watched it come closer. Maddie checked that her guns were loaded completely and Polly sat patiently, letting her experience guide the next move, if there was to be one.



Polly said to Maddie, "If the train is hit, it will be attacked from the left side. There is enough cover to allow an ambush."

Maddie looked over the possibilities and had to agree. The two women were on high alert as the train passed uneventfully.

"Damn it all. Mr. Winters was right," Maddie said with disappointment in her voice. She wasn't disappointed that the train wasn't robbed, but rather because Mr. Winters knew better than she did and he wasn't even from these parts.

"He is as good as any agent in the country, Maddie. You can count on that," Polly said with conviction. They turned their horses around and down the hill, beginning their ride back to Bear Gulch.

Riding toward them from the left are three Lakota hunters. Polly sees them and reaches for her pistol.

"Wait," Maddie says and calmly watches as they get closer. She recognizes Enapay even from a distance and begins to feel the blood rushing through her body. "It's fine. I know the one on the far right," she said.

Two of the Lakota stop and Enapay continues toward them. When he reaches them, he gestures behind him and holds up five fingers. He points to the horses and then gestures as if he is holding a rifle. He tries to say something in English but is having difficulty.

Finally, he says, "White Man." He turns his Paint horse around and rejoins the other hunters. Maddie and Polly watch as they ride across the grasslands.

Maddie says, "I think he was trying to tell me that five armed white horsemen are somewhere over that way."

"I would say we should go and see if we can find them, but we won't catch them in the act because the train has already passed."

"They are here for a reason. Maybe there is another train coming that has something they want," Maddie said thinking out loud.

"We can learn more at the train station if we go about it the right way," Polly suggested.

"Better yet, I can talk to Daddy. If there is anything of value like money and gold being moved, it will be coming out of his safe at the bank"

"Excellent, Maddie," Polly said as though she were amazed by Maddie's investigative skills. Polly seems to be as impressed with her as Maddie was with Polly's story.

Together they move at a slow walk through town and stop outside Whitman's livery.

"I'm going to return the horse, go to the hotel and get myself looking really nice before I go to the rail road station to charm some information out of the Station Master," Polly said as she climbed down from the Dapple. As she was leading her into the barn, she said, "After you talk with your father let me know what he says." Maddie nodded her head and made the clicking sound with her cheek that sets Jangles into motion.

Maddie stops in front of the bank where the teller, Theodore Robinson, is standing out front talking to a weathered looking man on horseback. It strikes Maddie as

odd that a mild-mannered man such as Mr. Robinson, would be engaged in conversation with a rough looking man of no apparent common interest. Maddie lays suspicion aside and walks into her Father's bank.

"I hope your not here looking for more money already," said Mr. Border with a smile.

"No, Daddy, I'm just here to find out a few things."

"Like what," he asked.

"When do you ship out cash and gold next to Chicago?"

"We have a shipment going out tomorrow morning, but not to Chicago. The gold is going to Omaha, Nebraska," said Maddie's father.

"Why, what is in Nebraska," asked Maddie?

"It is the home office for the company that owns it. What they do with it after it leaves here is not my concern," he said.

"How many people know this?"

"Myself, Theodore of course, and the station Master. Who all knows about it on the other end, well, I wouldn't have any way of knowing that? Once again, that is not my concern."

"Is it a lot of gold," Maddie asked.

"Why so many questions, Maddie? Is there something I should know about?"

"It is just that with the train robberies and the Pinkerton agents, I get a little worried that maybe your bank could become a target too," Maddie said.

Maddie's Daddy laughed and said, "Not much to worry about here dear. This safe is one of the strongest ever made to date. There is only one person that knows the combination to the lock and that is me."

“How well do you know Mr. Robinson?”

“We’ve only worked together for a year and I don’t see him socially, so not really that well. What are you getting at,” he asked his daughter?

“I want to believe that he is trustworthy, but I saw him talking to a man outside who looked like a drifter, a ne’r do well. It just didn’t seem likely that he would strike up a conversation with that type of man, that’s all,” she said.

“Are you suggesting I keep a close eye on him?”

Maddie said, “It just didn’t sit right with me.” Maddie stood and started to leave. “Be home for dinner tonight, Daddy?”

“Yes, yes I will be home for dinner. You might want to mention it to Jeanita when you get home.”

“Yes, sir,” she said and stepped out of his office. Theodore peered out of the teller’s cage at Maddie and she got the feeling he was looking a little nervous. Maddie thinks she needs to keep watch on the thin man with dark close-set eyes and curly black hair. As she rides past Whitman’s livery, she sees two men that look familiar. She can’t be sure but they may be men who rode with the gang that robbed the train last winter. She has no reason to follow them into the barn and decides against it.

As promised, Maddie goes to the hotel and finds Polly and Elise in the hotel dining room. Maddie approaches the table and asks, “May I speak with you a moment?”

Polly says, “Have a seat here,” and pats the back of the chair next to her.

Elise offers a polite smile. Maddie told them of talking to her Daddy and the unusual pairing she witnessed earlier of

Theodore Robinson and the swarthy man on the horse in front of the bank.

Elise listened carefully and said to Polly, "We need to be on that train in the morning."

Maddie said, "I'll go with you."

"No, this is Pinkerton business and needs to be handled by professionals."

Polly looked helplessly at Maddie, not having the authority to let her go even though she knew they could really use her in this situation. Maddie has plans of her own.

"You are right. I'm sure you have handled situations like this before and know how to blend in as passengers," she said.

"We have done this before with great results," Elise told her with great confidence.

Maddie settles Jangles in the carriage house for the night and climbs the ladder to the loft. The blanket and whiskey bottle she was looking for are gone. She turns the handle on the back door and lets herself into the kitchen.

Jeanita sees her and says, "You're back. I wasn't expecting to see you tonight."

"I changed my mind and came home. By the way, Father will be home for dinner."

Maddie walked through the house to the open staircase wondering what secrets Jeanita was keeping as she climbed the stairs to her bedroom. A nice long soak in the tub will relax and free her mind to come up with a plan to stop the train from being robbed tomorrow and put her face to face with the murderous bastard she knows will be in on it. She

lays back in the warm water and closes her eyes, submerged to her ears. The Pinkerton's can't know I'm on board or they'll refuse my help. I can't allow them to get in the way of what I need to do, she thought. Her head was spinning with the possibilities. I could get in a stable car with Jangles. If the fight took me outside, I'd already have the perfect horse to do battle with. If I waited with Jangles in the tree line in the hills, I could see trouble coming and might be able to end it all before it gets out of hand. Frustrated by the dilemma, Maddie sinks down into the tub and blows the air out of her lungs, making huge bubbles on the surface. When she comes up for air, Jeanita is at her side with a towel.

Startled, Maddie says, "Jesus, Jeanita. You scared me to death."

"I'm sorry. Dinner will be ready soon and Mr. Border arrived home a few minutes ago."

Maddie struggled with her modesty and stood up. The world did not come to an end. God did not strike her dead. Standing naked in front of Jeanita was actually liberating she felt. She reached out for the towel and began to wipe herself dry. She felt Jeanita's eyes upon her and struggled once again with the self-conscious feeling that wouldn't stay away.

Jeanita knew what she was feeling and said, "You are beautiful."

Then she stepped out and quietly closed the door behind her. Maddie heard Jeanita's words again in her mind and smiled to herself. She smiled at her own foolishness and for Jeanita's kindness.



Jeanita excused herself after serving Maddie and her father their dinner.

“Jeanita, won’t you please join us,” Mr. Border asked.

“If you are sure, I could join you,” she said.

Daddy got up and pulled a chair out next to his. She sat down and he pushed her in toward the table. Maddie thought this to be a generous gesture for which Jeanita seemed taken aback.

“Daddy, will you accompany the gold to the station in the morning?”

He said, “Yes. I’ll be expected to sign over responsibility for the shipment to the railroad security.”

“How many shipments have you lost to robbery,” Maddie asked.

“None actually. The robberies have all been incoming to Deadwood, not Bear Gulch.”

“What about outgoing shipments? Has Deadwood suffered losses from outgoing trains?”

“There you go again with all these questions,” he said, reaching for mashed potatoes.

“It is just a topic, Daddy. After all, if it wasn’t a serious concern, the Pinkerton people wouldn’t be here,” Maddie said, trying not to give away her intentions.

Father would not approve if he knew his daughter planned on gunning down the thieves to stop a robbery and protect the passengers from harm in the process. As Maddie cuts a piece of pork she reminds herself that the Pinkerton agents can’t discover what she is up to and that might be a difficult thing to accomplish. Jeanita’s napkin slipped from her lap to the floor and Mr. Border reached down and retrieved it for her.

“Thank you, Mr. Border,” she said.

“We are sharing dinner tonight, Jeanita. Please, call me Franklin,” he said.

Maddie was shocked by the sudden blush of his face and obvious interest. Jeanita did not respond, but offered Maddie a second slice of the pork. She pretended not to notice the exchange but now wondered if there had been a rendezvous in the carriage house, meant to be kept secret from her. She couldn’t blame Daddy for taking comfort in the arms of a beautiful woman and Jeanita certainly was that.

Maddie followed Jeanita into the kitchen after dinner and began gathering dishes.

“Let me help you with those,” she said. Jeanita reminded her that dishes were her job. “Not tonight,” said Maddie.

This was not Maddie’s first time with kitchen chores and worked alongside Jeanita as an equal in the task.

“So, tell me, why was there a blanket and a half empty bottle of whiskey in the loft, Jeanita,” Maddie asked with authority.

She put down her dish towel and a worried look came over her. “I didn’t mean any harm to come of it. Sometimes I let Rose sleep there to get away from the whores. I don’t think she likes being one, not really. I’m sorry. I won’t let it happen again. Do you have to tell Mr. Border,” Jeanita asked fearfully?

Maddie took Jeanita’s hands in hers and said, “No, Daddy wasn’t asking, I was. I just wanted to know, that’s all. Rose acts as though she is as tough as nails, but I can see a lot of

pain in her. She can sleep there any time she wants. It's fine with me. We'll just keep it from Daddy though."

"Thank you, Maddie. You are so thoughtful. You don't know what this means to me, and to Rose. She will be so glad to know you gave her permission to be in the carriage house," Jeanita said with sincerity.

Maddie awoke that morning to father's humming of an old tune her mother used to sing long ago. She looked out of her bedroom door into the hallway and watched as Daddy adjusted his tie on the way down the stairs to his breakfast. She hurriedly dressed herself and bounded through the house, not wanting to miss him before he left.

"Good morning, Daddy."

"Morning to you, Maddie," he cheerfully said.

"You must be going to the office early today," said Maddie.

"Yes I am. I have a lot of work to do this morning."

"Getting that shipment ready to go to the railroad?"

"Yes, and many other things in the fire this week."

Maddie makes a suggestion, "I think I'll walk you to your office."

"It's not necessary, but you are more than welcome to," he said.

He put on his hat and walked to the front doorway with Maddie right behind him. The morning was gray and misty. Maddie's senses were heightened and on full alert. When they reached the corner, they could see the rear door of the bank open with a wagon just outside. Two men sat waiting on the buckboard as Theodore Robinson steps out of the bank building to join them. Maddie watches as the men get

down from the wagon and go inside. She recognizes one of them as the man she saw talking to Mr. Robinson the day before.

"Are they the men that will deliver the gold to the railroad," Maddie asks her Father.

"Yes, they are the men that Mr. Robinson hired for the move."

"Do you know them," she asked.

"No. Not personally but Mr. Robinson vouched for them," said Mr. Border. Together they came around the corner and father unlocked the front door of the bank to enter. Maddie saw one of the men carrying two bank bags toward the rear from the safe.

She grabbed her father by the arm and softly said, "Wait. This doesn't look right. Is moving cash part of the job?"

"No. It certainly is not," he said.

"Daddy, go get the sheriff. I have guns. I will watch them."

"But, Maddie."

"Go," Maddie said with urgency.

He gave in to her demand and moved down the street to find the sheriff. Maddie drew both pistols and slipped around the side of the building. She quietly moved to the back door as two men came out carrying bank bags.

"Mr. Robinson, instruct your men to stop what they are doing and put the money down," she said in a clear strong voice. The men set the bags down and stood with their hands in the air.

Mr. Robinson nervously said, "You don't understand Miss Border. Your father knows of the shipment this morning."

“You were supposed to wait for my father before starting, and cash is not part of the shipment,” she angrily responded.

One of the men reached for his gun and Maddie quickly shot it out of his hand. He held onto his hand and yelled out in pain. The other man stood perfectly still, aside from a nervous tremor in his body.

“Mr. Robinson, keep your hands where I can see them. Father is on his way with the sheriff.”

Mr. Robinson, still holding two bags full of cash began to panic and threw one of the heavy bags at Maddie hitting her in the chest. She fell back and he drew a gun on her and fired, missing wildly. Still holding his injured hand, the man ran out of the back door while the nervous second man took out his pistol just as Maddie shot Mr. Robinson in the shoulder. She reeled around and shot the nervous man in the belly and watched him clutch his blood covered hands to his guts as he fell into a heap on the floor. Mr. Robinson was on his knees holding his shoulder. She kicked the guns away from the outlaws and looked out the back door but the injured man was gone.

The limping sheriff followed father through the door.

“Sheriff, these men assisted Mr. Robinson in robbing the bank. One of them got away but he has a bullet in his shooting hand,” she told him.

“Are you all right, Maddie,” her father asked.

“Yes, I’m fine,” she said.

The sheriff looked closely at the bleeding man on the floor and said, “He’s gone. That’s a fine way to start your day.”

The sheriff then grabbed Mr. Robinson by the collar of his shirt and jerked him up to his feet. "You're coming with me. I'll get the Doc to look at that shoulder back at the jail," he said to Mr. Robinson. He then turned to Mr. Border, pointed to the dead man, and said, "I don't know who this man is, never seen him before. After I get this one locked up, I'll get the undertaker to get him out of here."

Mr. Border said, "Thank you, I'd appreciate it."

The sheriff pushed Mr. Robinson through the door, leaving Maddie and her father with a dead man in a pool of blood. "We still have to get the shipment on the train, Daddy."

"Yes, we do," he said, looking at his pocket watch.

"If we can get it on the wagon, I can take it to the station," Maddie said.

"I'm really proud of the way you handled this, Maddie. I had no idea you could pull this off the way you did."

"I've been practicing for things like this. If we are going to live here, we have to be ready for anything," Maddie said matter of factly as she picked up the bags of cash and walked them back to the safe.

The undertaker arrived, and with the shipment loaded, Maddie slapped the reins across the backs of the team and rolled the wagon to the station.

Jeffery and Elise arrived together and took seats on the train, pretending to be a traveling couple as Maddie signed the paperwork relieving her father of responsibility for the shipment of gold. As the railroad agents loaded it into a special car with two small windows, Maddie wondered why Polly was not with them. Someone inside the car, slid the



heavy door closed and she heard it latch and lock. For the briefest of moments, she saw Polly's freckled face in the small window. Polly hoped that Maddie hadn't seen her and settled into a bolted seat, holding a shotgun across her lap, ready for whatever comes next.

Someone banged on the front door of the run-down whorehouse. "Keep your pants on. I'm comin'," Edith yelled from inside.

She opened the door to find a man with a rag tied around a bloody hand. "Let me in," he said.

"I don't want no trouble," she said.

"Get Tom and the boys down here right now," he said, wincing in pain.

Tom quickly came down the stairs with two others trailing behind. Tom sat down and pulled on his boots asking, "What the hell went wrong?" Rose appeared on the stairs just as he said,

"Some girl came in and started shootin' the place up. That idiot Robinson and Jimmy both got shot. Looks real bad for Jimmy."

Tom slammed his fist into the arm of the chair and shouted, "Where is the god damned gold."

"Probably on the train by now," he answered, shaking his burning hand.

"Has it left yet?"

"I don't think so."

Tom looked at Edith and Rose and then he said, "If either one of you says one god damned word, I'll kill you both."

Edith answered with, "I ain't sayin' nothin'."

Tom and his three friends went out and rode away. Rose ran back up the stairs and burst into her room throwing on

clothes as fast as she could. Before she left her room she opened a drawer and took out her gun.

She ran down the stairs saying, "Edith, I'll be back in a while."

"Where you goin' girl," Edith asked.

"Never you mind," she said as she went out the door.

Maddie burst through the front door at home and ran to her room. She slid her Winchester out from under her bed and went to the carriage house. She saddled Jangles and was leading him out of his stall when Rose appeared in the doorway.

"Tom and his friends just left and they are up to something."

Maddie said, "I know exactly what they are up to." She jumped on to Jangles and galloped away.

Rose left in a hurry to Whitman's Livery. "I'm gonna need a horse."

"You got money or we going to work something out," he asked.

She handed him three dollars and said, "Hurry up and get me a horse."

Maddie stopped short of the rail station, where she saw Tom and his cohorts looking the situation over. She was sure she hadn't been seen. Maddie watched as they rode off to the east. She followed them at a safe distance staying in the trees at the crest of the hills whenever she could. Rose had other plans of her own.

Behind her in the distance she heard the train rolling along the tracks in her direction. Knowing the horsemen

weren't far ahead, she decided to wait where she was to see how this was going to play out.

Inside the train, Jeffery Winters and Elise Mitchell study the other travelers and stay alert to any outside activity. Maddie sees the horsemen moving to the tracks below dragging part of a downed pine tree behind them. They pull it onto the tracks.

"This is it, Jangles," she said. She looked over her shoulder and saw the train coming. The horsemen backed away from the tracks and into cover amongst the pines.

Mr. Winters, alerted by the slowing train tapped Elise on the hand, but she was already laying her pistol out under her newspaper on the seat. In the bank car, Polly held the shotgun pointed at the door, poised to pull the trigger the moment the door was opened. Still, Maddie watched from her vantage point above. The sky was darkening with heavy gray clouds that threatened to let loose with a downpour at any moment. She saw the train come to a complete stop. The fireman and engineer both climbed down from the engine and began tugging on the pine tree blocking their path. The skies opened up and the rain began to pour. The horsemen made their move and swiftly rode down to the train, shooting the two men who never saw it coming. Two of them entered the passenger car while the other two went to the bank car.

Entering the passenger car was easy, they had done this before. In a loud voice one of the horsemen ordered the passengers to unload anything of value into the burlap sack he carried down the aisle while the second man kept his gun trained on them, expecting someone to resist.

Polly moved to the little window having heard the other two horsemen trying the latch. "Son of a bitch is all locked up," said the horseman to his partner, Tom.

"Shoot the Goddamned lock out," said Tom.

The horseman shot several times at the lock and splintered the wood door enough to make his way in. He slid the door open to be greeted by Polly's shotgun. He raised his gun too late and Polly dropped him to the floor. Tom made the mistake of trying his luck next, blazing his way through the door without a target in plain sight. There he stood in the open door with the pouring rain behind him. He heard the clear sound of a shotgun barrel locking down and dived out of the car and into the pouring rain. Polly leaned out of the car and fired but missed as he rode away.

"Damn," she said.

The horseman with the rag still tied around his hand shuffled along with the burlap bag, collecting the valuables.

Elise whispered to Mr. Winters saying, "I'll take down the gunman if you will get the one with the bag."

Mr. Winters said, "When they are two seats from reaching us, we'll fire on my signal." The horsemen were focused on what the passengers were dropping in the bag when Mr. Winters said, "Now."

The passengers and the horsemen were stunned by the turn of events. The horsemen looked as though they couldn't comprehend what had just happened. The gunman looked down at his arm that moments ago held the gun that was controlling the entire car. The man with the bag couldn't believe he had been shot twice in one day. Falling

back in a seat across from an old couple. He held his shoulder, feeling the burn all the way to his fingertips.

“What the hell,” he yelled.

Mr. Winters pushed the barrel of his gun against the nose of the horseman and said, “It could have been worse, but you are worth more to us alive, so today is your lucky day.” Elise forced the other gunman to the floor and stood with her pistol pointed at his head.

Maddie watched with mounting conviction fueled by anger as Tom rode hard in the pouring rain toward her. He turned away from the tracks and started the climb to the top of the Pine covered hill where Maddie was waiting. Her Winchester kept him in her sights and she wiped the water from her face, not wanting to miss the opportunity to avenge the deaths of her mother and all the innocent people whose dead faces flashed before her eyes again. He was close enough to hear his horses’ deep hard breaths and hooves pounding the wet ground below them. She aimed between his eyes but pulled right and blew off his ear. His horse spun around in a circle and Tom fell to the ground. Maddie walked with purpose toward him with the Winchester out to her side.

“You Bitch,” he screamed and she squeezed the trigger and watched the bullet tear open his upper thigh. She kept walking with her teeth clenched and rage she could barely control. He fired at her and she felt the hot iron rip through her side. He fired again and hit her in the upper arm. Is this a dream she thought or am I walking in the rain with two bullets in me toward the bastard that killed my mother?

Tom laid on his back, digging his feet into the ground, pushing away from her and pulling the trigger over and over with nothing left in the chamber.

Maddie took her revolver from its holster and asked, "Any last words?" He spit at her. She wiped the spit off her face and said, "Well, the last words you will ever hear are mine. You murdered my defenseless mother and took her away from me and my father forever. You have nothing I can take from you but your worthless life."

Begging, Tom said, "Wait, I'm worth a one-thousand-dollar reward now. Take me in. It will be all yours."

Maddie cocked her gun and suddenly felt very weak and dizzy. in a labored breath she said, "I've got money, what I want is ... your life. She didn't feel her finger squeeze the trigger and the blast from her gun sounded muffled as if it came from a great distance. What she saw was a hole in his forehead and his hat blowing off of his head. Blackness spread over her and the only real thing she felt for sure was the rain pelting her face where she lay.



## Chapter Ten

### The Gift

Maddie wouldn't know for two days that she was lifted by Enapay and carried on his pony to the Lakota village in the steady rain. Rose rode beside them with Jangles close behind and a still warm pistol on her side. MaKawee, Rose's mother cared for her through the night and filled her wounds with a poultice made of herbs and animal fat after the bullets were dug out by Wahkan, who was of great position within the village. Maddie awoke and tried to sit up and the pain reminded her of what had happened. MaKawee gently covered her and she slipped back into sleep.

Rose helped her mother check and dress the wounds again and asked, "Is she getting better?"

MaKawee said, "She is getting better but it will take time before we can let her travel to her home. She needs to gather her strength."

Rose searched her thoughts for words for her mother and finally said, "I am fortunate to be at least half Lakota. I am

proud of that part of my heritage. You are a great people and I wish I could live this life with you.”

Tears flowed from Rose, both because she missed being with her mother, and knowing that she was not connected to either world.

“You mother, belong here. I belong nowhere, and it breaks my spirit every day.” MaKawee opened her arms and Rose fell into them. She rocked her and sang a tune Rose heard as an infant. She was comforted by the motion and the vibration in her mother’s chest as the little song was released into the warm, dry tipi. MaKawee stroked her head and said, “Chumani, my little dewdrop, to me you are not Lakota or white. You are my child and my heart is yours completely, always.” Rose collapsed on her and sobbed with the joy of acceptance that came from the only voice that truly mattered to her.

Enapay came to the entrance of the tipi and called out, “May I come in and see the white woman?”

MaKawee said, “Yes, Enapay, come in.”

He stepped in and went to Maddie’s side where Rose was spooning broth into her mouth. Rose looked up and smiled at Enapay before moving away where he could look upon her closely. Maddie sensed his presence and tried to sit up. He gently touched her shoulder in an effort to keep her reclined.

He turned to MaKawee and asked, “How is she healing?”

MaKawee said, “She is doing well, but won’t be ready to travel for two to three days. Then she should be fine.”

He nodded his head and said, “Good. Thank you MaKawee for caring for her. We will call upon the healing spirits to make her well soon.” Then he turned to Rose,

“Chumani, will you stay with her and ride with her when it is time?”

“I wanted to get back by tomorrow before I lose my job, but I will stay if I am needed,” she said.

Enapay said, “If you cannot stay, I will ride with her and see her safely to her home.”

Maddie drifted off to sleep after hearing his voice. Even though she doesn’t know the language, she knows she is safe and cared for.

When Maddie awoke, she was alert and listened carefully to tribal life outside the tipi. The sounds of children laughing and dogs playfully barking, lifted her spirits. She sat up and let the blanket slide off of her, and noticed that she was wearing an Elk hide Lakota dress belonging to MaKawee. She saw her own clothes lying on the floor but decided not to change into them.

Slowly she stood up from the mat where she had been laying for the past three days and shuffled to the tipi entrance and threw back the flap. The sun hurt her eyes as she stepped out and all activity stopped. The women and tribesmen stood silent watching her. The children approached and their dogs came up to sniff her. When her eyes adjusted to the brightness of day, she was awed by everyone and everything around her. Maddie marveled at the beaded and painted dresses of the women around her and noticed that the one she wore was plain and simple with no decoration at all. The children gathered around her as she was different and strange to them. They seemed to be fascinated by her eyes and hair, so different from their own deep brown eyes and shiny black hair. A little five-year-old girl looked up and smiled at Maddie, reaching for her hand.

The tipi were all painted with stories of respect for the animals they hunted and the life they all shared together on the Plains.

Enapay walked beside his horse through the busy village and saw her exploring Lakota life with children and women quietly following behind her. Maddie saw him and stopped where she was, waiting to see if he would come to her. Her heart began to pound as he moved closer and closer with each step forward. The Lakota children stepped aside as he reached her.

She could not contain her smile any longer and said his name, "Enapay."

He gestured with a nod of his head and said, "Maddie."

She was thrilled that he knew her name and felt it important enough to not only remember, but to learn to utter it upon greeting her. He seemed to be pleased with how she looked, wearing the simple dress of the tribes people. Rose appeared carrying water back to the tipi.

"So, you are up and, on your feet," She said.

Maddie tore her eyes away from Enapay to say, "Yes, I'm a little stiff and sore but I'm much better now." Rose's eyes darted from Maddie to Enapay.

"He said my name," Maddie said with a giddy look on her face.

"He doesn't need to say anything else. You can see it on his face he's smitten with you, Maddie."

"How do you know," Maddie asked.

"You can't see it, but he's blushing and acting stupid."

They both laughed and the children began to laugh too even though they hadn't a clue about what was said.

"I'm going back today. If you are up to it, Enapay will ride to Bear Gulch with you tomorrow."

"Are you sure he will ride all that way with me?"

Rose smiled and said, "He offered."

Maddie looked back to Enapay and said, "Thank you."

Rose started to walk to the tipi. "Come with me. It's time to change your dressings."

Maddie slowly followed Rose back to the tipi with the children surrounding her. She looked back where Enapay still stood with his eyes fixed upon her. The thought that he was still there made her happy and warm.

The aged man, Wahkan, entered the tipi and Rose stepped away from Maddie so he could examine her wounds and determine if she was healing well enough to travel soon. Maddie watched his face looking for clues to her condition as he touched her with his smooth fingertips. Wahkan's hands weren't the hands of a laborer or hunter and she decided that he was the village doctor.

"I'm leaving soon. I will tell Jeanita that you will be home tomorrow," Rose said.

"Thank you Rose, for everything. Will you tell the doctor and your mother thank you for me? I feel indebted to the Lakota for the care they have shown a stranger," Maddie said with great sincerity.

Rose turned to Wahkan and MaKawee repeating what Maddie had instructed her to say.

"One more thing, Rose."

What's that," Rose asked.

"Everyone's dress has paintings of animals and streams. Your mother's shows hills and deer, buffalo and people. Why doesn't the one I am wearing have anything at all on it," Maddie asked.

Rose said, "My Mother's name is MaKawee. It means Earth Maiden. Her dress tells the story of her name and who she is. Lakota. The dress you wear is plain because as of this moment, you have no story."

MaKawee brought solid food to Maddie and she ate while Rose said good bye to her. She watched as they hugged long and hard, savoring the smells of one another and filling their arms with each other as though it would need to last a life time. Maddie thought of her own mother and how she never cared to hug her or hold on one last time. Her greatest loss, with the passing of Mother, was the sadness that filled her father for months after her murder.

Now, Tom is dead and the debt is settled, at least for Maddie. She thinks about tomorrow and the ride home. The thought crosses her mind that it is only a four-hour ride to Bear Gulch and that won't be enough time with Enapay. She will need more time to show him that something wonderful can grow between them. How is that going to be accomplished. He doesn't understand English and Maddie fears everything can be lost in translation. If there was only a way to communicate her heart to him.

MaKawee entered the tipi and said, "Come outside. There are gifts for you."

Maddie was confused and curious, wondering what it could be and why. She stepped out and was greeted by several women and children. One of the women stepped forward and presented her with an elk hide dress that had a



freshly painted image of a buffalo and a white woman on a horse with a long gun aimed at some unseen target.

“Your first gift is this dress that tells your story as a great woman protector and hunter with courage and strength. This is why the Buffalo is painted next to a drawing of you,” MaKawee said.

A child reached his hand up, offering Maddie a small pouch.

“The next gift is tobacco to burn and carry your prayers to the Great Spirits.”

Maddie was stunned by the generosity of the tribe and didn’t know what to say.

“The last gift is the most important of all. The Village has given you a Lakota name. You are called, Ptaysanwee. The White Buffalo,” MaKawee announced with great pride in what her tribal family had done.

Maddie was overwhelmed with emotion and tears of happiness streamed down her cheeks.

Maddie said to MaKawee, “Tell them that I am honored to be known to them as Ptaysanwee. Please thank them for the kindness and generosity they have shown to a white woman.”

She looked into the faces of everyone around her and spoke saying, “You open your arms and hearts to me, a stranger not of your tribe but of the same land. I am asking you to do the same for one of your own sisters and accept Chumani into the village where she can live with her mother amongst her own people where she belongs and her heart already dwells. Petition your chiefs and elders on this matter for the good of all of our people.”

When the sun came up again, Maddie had already pulled on her trousers and boots. She stood examining the small hole in her shirt where Tom's bullet pierced her side and slid her arms into the sleeves. After strapping her holster around her waist, she checked both pistols to be certain she was fully loaded for the trail. She tossed her wide brimmed hat on her head and cradled the Winchester in her arms before stepping out of the tipi and into the already busy village. She walked to the outer edge of the village where all of the horses grazed seemingly unattended and whistled loudly. Jangles whinnied loudly and trotted from within the herd toward her. She looked around for signs of Enapay but saw nothing of him at all. She jumped on her horse and slowly began to walk him away from the Lakota village, hoping Enapay would join them soon.

Maybe he was busy hunting. Maybe he forgot. She felt sadness come upon her. Maybe he didn't really care. She clicked her tongue into her cheek and set Jangles off at a canter. Maddie was surprised that the gait was not jarring to her injuries and was glad to be on the back of her old friend again. later in the morning the heat began to rise and she felt dry and thirsty. Knowing that Jangles would need water and rest, she rode toward the old homestead cabin she and Rose had spent half the day smoking cigarettes in and getting to know each other. Maddie was soaking wet with sweat and felt the burn of the hot sun on her face and could only think of the cool water of the creek flowing over her, cooling her to her bones.

There it was. She licked her dry lips and guided Jangles to a willow bent over the creek and slid off his sticky hot back. He drank deeply while she pulled off her trousers and

boots. She stepped into the water and felt it's rushing current swirl around her knees and even the mucky bottom oozing under her feet and between her toes felt like heaven. She sank down to her neck and looked up at the old abandoned cabin. Even in its derelict state, it held its own charm and whimsy in this perfect place on the creek. For Maddie, it was an ideal oasis. She let her head slip under the water and heard the rush of water passing her ears and instantly felt her face cool in relief of the stifling heat. She pushed her face up out of the water for a breath of air and opened her eyes to see Enapay sitting on his Paint a few yards back from the banks of the creek. She didn't know what to do. Maddie was afraid to step out, naked from the waist down. She thought of Rose and Jeanita and how they might respond to this situation.

Enapay seemed to sense her dilemma and turned his horse toward the cabin. With his back to her as he rode to the shaded old house, Maddie wasted no time in reaching the banks to pull on her trousers over her wet legs. She shook her head from side to side freeing her hair of the excess water. He walked toward her and knelt at the creek splashing water over his face and neck. A gentle breeze stirred and promised relief from the exhausting heat of the day. Enapay looked to the West for signs of a storm giving Maddie an opportunity to devour him with her eyes. She felt guilty about the shameless pleasure he unknowingly brought her but this indulgence was too commanding to control.

Enapay turned to her and with the softest voice she had ever heard, began to speak. His face showed his frustration. He desperately wanted to communicate something to

Maddie and she knew it. She looked into his eyes with hope in her heart that he was trying to tell her that he wanted her the way she wanted him and wished there was a way to help him find the words. Maddie stepped softly toward him until they were face to face. She took a deep breath and boldly placed her arms around him. Maddie couldn't believe she had done it and reveled in the warmth of his skin against hers. Slowly she felt him return the embrace, sliding his hands around her waist. He lowered his head and nuzzled her neck, sending shivers down her spine and showering passion between her legs. She laid her head against his chest and listened to the thump of his pounding heart and felt his growing desire pressing against her. Maddie tilted her head toward his face, waiting for his lips to meet hers. She stretched upward and kissed his chin and throat and let her hands explore his stomach and chest. Neither wanted to break apart but the heat of the day was adding more fire than they could handle. Maddie took both of his hands and walked backwards to the creek, never breaking their gaze into the other's eyes. Neither said a word as she unbuttoned her shirt and let it drift to the ground. Maddie pressed herself against him again and placed his hands on her swollen breasts. He bent down and kissed her lips, savoring the youthful flavor of her. Her hands worked furiously to unbutton her trousers until they slid down around her ankles. She stepped out of them as he picked her up in his arms and carried her into the water. Hungrily she kissed his full lips and tugged at his shirt. Enapay pulled it over his head and threw it to the banks of the creek.

His wet body against hers pushed Maddie to a plateau she had never climbed before and ached to know more. A voice

called out. "Maddie." Maddie and Enapay stopped and saw Polly standing at the edge of the creek. Maddie's heart sank and she knew the moment had passed.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"Rose said you were riding home today, so I came out to meet you and accompany you home."

"Well, give me a minute to get myself together. Wait for me at the cabin, please," Maddie said with a little agitation in her voice.

Polly turned her horse and rode up to the cabin. Maddie looked sadly at Enapay who had already climbed out and put his shirt back on. He nodded his head to Maddie and swung up on the back of his Paint. She waded out of the water and watched him ride across the grasses as she buttoned her shirt. Maddie silently saddled Jangles and slipped the Winchester into its sleeve.

Polly walked up to her and said, "Your Father has been worried to death. We all were. Nobody knew what happened to you until Rose showed up yesterday. I was there at your home with Elise and Jeffery when she came in. We wanted to tell you how to collect the reward you are entitled to."

Maddie wrapped the gun belt around her waist and asked, "Are you telling me that the railroad is ready to settle it already?"

"Yes. In all the confusion we didn't know exactly who shot who and the Pinkerton agency isn't entitled to a claim in the reward as we are contracted by Union Pacific so, we submitted a claim in your name, for all of it."

"I see," Maddie said.

"Aren't you going to ask how much it is worth?"



Maddie wasn't in the mood to talk about any reward. She just wanted to be left alone. She didn't want it to be over like that and now Enapay is gone. The emptiness in the pit of her stomach wasn't going to go away for any amount of money.

"It's five thousand dollars, Maddie," Polly said.

Without another word, Maddie got on Jangles and turned him toward Bear Gulch.

Polly and Maddie entered the main street of Bear Gulch and as they rode side by side Polly said, "Maddie, what you did out there took courage and skill and it was noticed by Mr. Winters. He would like to talk to you about a position with The Pinkerton Agency. Security Detail Division in particular."

"Why would I want to do that?"

"Because you would be based out of Chicago for one thing and for another it is a tailored fit for you. You have excellent shooting skills. You are a clear thinker with a great knack for investigating and you are easy on the eyes. I have been in very exciting situations working undercover in New York and even Washington. Yes, it can be very dangerous and that is exactly why it takes a special kind of individual to do this work. Will you at least talk with Jeffery before we leave tomorrow?"

"Let me think about it," Maddie said.

"Of course. We leave at four tomorrow afternoon. You can come by the hotel in the morning if you decide to talk with Mr. Winters further."



Polly stopped her horse outside of Whitman's Livery Stable and said, "I hope you will seriously consider it. I would really like to work with you."

Maddie clicked her tongue into her cheek and Jangles began to walk on toward home.



## Chapter Eleven

### Decisions

Maddie led Jangles into his stall and filled his grain bin. As she laid his saddle out on a straw bale, her father and Jeanita came into the carriage house.

“It’s over, Daddy,” Maddie said. He came up to her and hugged his only daughter.

He choked back tears and searched his mind for the right thing to say and all he could find was, “I know. I am so sorry that I brought you out here to this wild place. It is no place for a fine young woman like you. I am so sorry, Maddie. Please forgive me.”

“No Daddy. If I hadn’t come here, I would never have known who I wanted to be or learned the things I have since I arrived. I don’t regret coming here at all. It has prepared me for things to come and opened my eyes to the world in ways I never dreamed before. Don’t be sorry. I was the one who wanted to face them and see them brought to justice. I couldn’t let them get away with taking mother from us.”

"I'd like to have the doctor take a look at your wounds," Mr. Border said.

"I'm fine Daddy. The Lakota took very good care of me."

"Still, I would feel better if a real doctor gave us his opinion."

"I can go tomorrow and get them looked at but, I know he is going to say I am fine. The Lakota culture is much more sophisticated and civilized than white people understand them to be," Maddie said.

Jeanita followed Maddie and her Father into the house where she asked, "Can I fix you something to eat? You must be hungry."

"That would be wonderful, Jeanita. Anything at all is fine," Maddie cheerfully said.

She surprised herself with her happy response. Earlier, she was sure she was living the worst day of her life and now she is home with her good friend, Jeanita and Daddy can be at ease once again. Weather the storm and bounce right back, I guess that's what we do, Maddie thought. Jeanita busied herself preparing a meal for Mr. Border and his daughter.

Maddie said, "I'll be right back. I have something to show you."

Maddie returned to the kitchen wearing the Elk hide dress and announced, "The children painted it and I was given the Lakota name, Ptaysanwee, the White Buffalo."

"Maddie, that is quite an honor."

Maddie held out her hand with the bag of tobacco, "This is for you, Jeanita. I can't say I'm much for prayers anymore."

Jeanita slipped it into the pocket of her apron. "Thank you, Maddie."

"You are more than welcome." Maddie turns into the hallway striding to her dad's study.

"I was offered a position with the Pinkerton Agency today."

Mr. Border set down his reading and looked over the top of his wire rimmed glasses, "Yes, Mr. Winters mentioned it to me. He said you were an excellent candidate for the agency. Did you accept?"

"I haven't given it enough thought. They want me to talk to them before they leave tomorrow," Maddie said.

"Sleep on it. I'm sure you'll make the right decision," her Father said.

Maddie found it very difficult to sleep with so many things to weigh. She sat up in her bed and listened to the night sounds of leaves rustling in the tree outside her window and an owl somewhere in the distance. She caught the smell of burning tobacco wafting up to her and went to the window and saw Jeanita down below at the back of the house. She put on her mother's old housecoat and quietly stepped out the back door to join her. Jeanita was inhaling smoke from a cigarette she had rolled and threw it down on the ground and quickly stepped on it when she heard Maddie whisper her name.

"Can't sleep," Jeanita asked.

"No. So much to think about. I have to figure out what to do with the reward money and I have to give the Pinkerton people my decision about the job."

"Doesn't seem to me like that is anything to lose sleep over," Jeanita said.

"It's not just that. There's Enapay. We had a real something happen you know; I mean we were getting close to something and I don't really want to just walk away from it," Maddie said with a heavy sigh.

"There will be a lot of men to come along that will strike up the same fire in you. You'll be fine. I hear Chicago is wonderful and the Pinkerton agency is a real good opportunity for someone with your abilities," Jeanita said in her most consoling tone of voice. She took Maddie's hand in hers and said, "You are young, you need to experience what the world offers you. You will be fine where ever you land."

"You think so," Maddie asked, so unsure of herself at that moment.

"Yes, I do. Now, go back to bed, go to sleep and when you wake up, do what your gut tells you and don't second guess your choice."

Maddie smiled and hugged Jeanita, "Good night."

She watched Maddie go into the house and when the door had closed, she got out her bag and rolled another cigarette. Jeanita smiled to herself, shook her head and said, "That girl has the whole world in her hands." She struck a match that lit her still smiling face.

Maddie came down the stairs to the sound of her Father's voice in the kitchen, "Good morning, Jeanita," he said while dragging a chair out from the table to take a seat, waiting on breakfast.

When Maddie entered, Jeanita was sliding two eggs from a skillet onto her father's plate before him.

"Good morning Daddy, Jeanita."



He looked over his paper and asked, "Did you sleep well?"

"Not particularly well," Maddie said, pouring coffee into a cup.

Jeanita set a stack of buttered toast in front of her and walked back to the stove.

"Daddy, I'm going to the hotel this morning to talk to Mr. Winters about that position with the Pinkerton Agency," Maddie said while searching his face for a reaction to her announcement.

"I see," he said.

"What do you think about it?"

He lowered his paper. "Maddie, you are a smart young woman and never one to follow convention. I think if anyone is suited to the adventure, it's you. I know you would do well."

Relief spread across her face. "Thank you, Daddy. I was hoping that's what you'd say."

He looked over her clothes and asked, "Are you really going to an interview dressed in that manner?"

"Well, it's the only way they have ever seen me and it doesn't seem to bother them. Besides, I'm not looking at it as an interview. I'm looking at it as an inquiry about a starting date, types of investigations I might be involved in, requirements like training and of course my salary. Also, I want to find out how and when I will collect the reward money."

"Very good, Maddie. I like your thinking," said Mr. Border. Jeanita nodded her head to Maddie and gave her a subtle wink and smile.

The hotel dining room was busy with hungry travelers and business men when Maddie entered at the peak morning breakfast rush. She scanned the room looking for the Pinkerton agents when Jeffery Winters stepped up behind her.

“Maddie, what a wonderful surprise. Will you join us at our table?”

“Good morning, Mr. Winters. Yes, I’d love to,” Maddie said. He led the way to a table by the window where Polly and Elise were already seated.

“I hope you are here to say you would like to join the agency,” Polly said.

Elise stirred her coffee and listened intently.

Maddie said, “I think it is an interesting possibility, but I have a few questions.”

Elise, beautifully dressed for travel and poised to initiate an interview said, “I think I may be able to help with any concerns you might have regarding employment within the agency.”

“My first question is in regards to re-location. Will I be based in Chicago,” asked Maddie?

Jeffery jumped in and said, “Yes, Chicago is the home base of operations. We can help you with finding suitable housing.”

Maddie accepted a cup of coffee as it was being poured before her by a round faced waitress with a friendly smile.

“We actually still have a home on the North side of the city so that really isn’t an issue. Will I receive formal training for the position? Just because I can ride and shoot doesn’t necessarily qualify me as an agent.”

Not wanting to have her position minimized, Elise quickly asserted herself. "Yes. There will be classes to develop investigative skills as well as hand to hand defensive measures. We take great pride in our program that develops women's social skills and presence in the field."

Polly giggled and said, "That means we teach you to fight like a man and slay them with charm and worldly sophistication."

Mr. Winters calmly added, "In our line of work we often assume a persona and history that not only protects our true identity but one that allows us access within circles we need to infiltrate for intelligence."

"We become masters of disguise for our mission, Maddie," Polly cheerfully announced.

"Very intriguing," Maddie admitted with a smile.

Mr. Winters said, "I'm detecting interest. Do you have any other questions for us?"

"Yes, I do. Can you tell me about salary," Maddie asked?

Elise pulled a sheet of paper from a folder and slid it over to Maddie. "This will explain your salary for training and what you can expect in the field as a first-year agent with Pinkerton's," she said.

Maddie was astonished by the figures outlined in the proposal.

Mr. Winters said, "What we do can sometimes be very dangerous and take us all over the world."

"We are often absent from our families for months on end and the days are quite often sixteen to eighteen hours if need be.

Pinkerton's understands the commitment and sacrifice the agents willingly take on with each new assignment and generously compensates them accordingly."

Everyone's eyes were on Maddie when she looked up from the paper and she sensed they were waiting on her decision. She laid the paper in front of her and asked, "When would you expect me to begin."

Mr. Winters and Elise seemed to relax as if they felt Maddie was ready to accept the position.

"We would like you to begin immediately if that is acceptable to you," Jeffery said.

"Actually, I have some things to attend to but I could join you in Chicago in say, one month. If that is acceptable to you,"

Maddie said, as if she were negotiating the biggest deal of her short life.

Elise shook her head and said, "I'm sorry but this position is one we would like to fill today."

Mr. Winters put both hands up and said, "Well, I think that would be acceptable. I don't see any reason why we can't agree to that." He thrust his hand out to Maddie and she placed her hand in his.

Elise was filled with seething anger, having been dismissed in the bargaining for the acquisition of Maddie's service. Polly was filled with glee. She had long wanted someone of a similar age and talents to work with.

Maddie stood, concluding the meeting. Elise extended her hand and smile to Maddie and said, "Congratulations. We look forward to working with you."

Maddie said, "Thank you. Thank you all for this opportunity."

She started for the door and Mr. Winters called out, "Maddie, one last thing." He took an envelope from his breast pocket and placed it in her hand. "In representation of the Union Pacific Railroad, I am authorized to present to you, five thousand dollars for your good work in the apprehension of the wanted offenders to the property of the railroad. Please accept this and our sincerest gratitude."

Maddie walked to the double doors that opened into the street, leaving her employers to their breakfast in the dining room. Maddie jumps onto Jangles back and rides down the main street with thoughts of the exciting future ahead and all the things she will need to do to be ready in one month's time.





## Chapter Twelve

### Loose Ends

Maddie brought Jangles to a stop in front of her Father's bank. "I'll be right back, Jangles." She ran up the wooden steps and through the door where her father was training a new teller.

Maddie listened patiently as her father gently instructed the woman on recording customer deposits. The woman appeared to be in her early forties and quite attractive. Daddy has apparently noticed, Maddie thought as she observed his very attentive behavior.

He saw Maddie waiting and held up a finger. "I'll be with you in a moment, Maddie." He looked down on the teller trainee and proudly announced, "That young woman is my daughter, Madison."

The woman smiled and nodded in Maddie's direction. I think something is brewing over there between them, Maddie thought. Maddie decides that it wouldn't hurt Father to have an interesting friendship with a beautiful woman. Besides, anything that keeps him from becoming a

recluse in his off hours is a good thing. Maddie knows he loved her mother and that the loneliness he's lived with has had to tear at his heart and soul. Maybe she, whoever she is, could help occupy his time and bring back the happy good-humored soul she knew him to be and has missed for so long.

Smiling and with a quickened step, Mr. Border came to Maddie and turned back to face the teller window saying, "Hazel, I'd like you to meet my daughter, Maddie. Maddie, Meet Hazel Meade. She is new to the bank and a fine fit indeed."

"Pleased to meet you, Miss Meade," Maddie said politely.

"Come into my office, Maddie my dear," Mr. Border said. He smiled again at Hazel and instructed her to, "Come and get me if you need anything, anything at all."

Maddie wondered if he would stop gushing over this woman long enough to give her a minute of his time. Maddie sat down and waited for him to settle in behind his desk. She took off her hat and removed the envelope from inside of it.

"This is the reward money I got from the railroad. I just wanted to bring it by so you could put it away for me," she said.

"Of course." He looked at the envelope and asked, "Do you mind if I take a peek?"

Maddie was filled with pride when she saw Father's reaction upon seeing what the envelope held. "Well, we'd better get this deposited right away." He seemed thrilled at another opportunity to stand next to this charming new teller.

They stood up and Maddie could see where his focus was at the moment and said, "I'm going to get going, Daddy. I want to talk to you about some other great news at dinner tonight."

"I'm sorry, I won't be having dinner at home tonight, Maddie. I have another, umm, pressing engagement this evening." He glanced over at the teller's cage where Maddie caught sight of Hazel looking somewhat uncomfortable. Either I am cut out to be an investigator or this situation is the most obvious thing I have ever witnessed, Maddie thought as she slapped her hat back onto her head.

"Maybe, we can talk tomorrow at breakfast." Maddie smiled, then looked directly at Hazel and said, "Unless of course, there are other pressing matters."

Hazel seemed to shrink behind the teller cage at Maddie's observation. Mr. Border hurried over to help her deposit his daughter's new found fortune. Maddie chuckled to herself and couldn't fault him one bit as she stepped outside into the late morning sun.

Jeanita walked down the hallway on the second floor of the Border home and peeked through Maddie's open door to her room. Her trunks were open and dresses were laid out on the bed and hung over a dressing screen. Maddie stood in front of a free-standing oak framed mirror with one of the dresses held against her. Jeanita knocked on the door frame.

"Come in," Maddie said.

Jeanita looked around the messy room.

"I know, I know. I have clothes everywhere." She drops the dress where she stands and says, "Nothing fits anymore and they all look too young for me now."

Jeanita smiled. "You've bloomed, Maddie. You are right, you need something suitable for a woman. Will your father approve of purchases? I would be more than happy to help you find some things."

Maddie started tossing the dresses back into the trunk and said, "I might be able to find something to travel to Chicago in and build my wardrobe when I get there."

"That's a great idea, Maddie. So much more to choose from in a big city like Chicago."

Maddie knew that Jeanita had never been to a big city and had no idea what it was really like. With no elaboration, she simply replied, "Yes."

As she stepped to the door, Jeanita said, "If you will excuse me, I have tasks to complete."

"Wait!" Maddie quickly stepped to the doorway and took both Jeanita's hands in hers. "When I leave, please watch over my father."

"I will for as long as he requires my service, I promise." Jeanita turned and continued down the hall to the main bathroom. Maddie thought about her father and what might happen if something significant develops between him and the new teller, Hazel. Maddie listened to Jeanita down the hall, mopping the floor and wondered if that would leave her employment at risk. When she talks to Daddy tomorrow at breakfast, Jeanita's future is something she needs clarified. In the meantime, Maddie had something else she needed to do.

“Edith!” Maddie banged on the door of the worn-down old whorehouse and called out again. “Edith, Rose! It’s me Maddie. I need to talk to you.”

With sleep in her eyes, Rose opened the door and squinted into the bright daylight. “What do you want?”

“You killed Tom.”

“So what?”

“He had a thousand-dollar bounty on his head and it’s yours, that’s what.”

Rose stepped out onto the porch and sat in the filthy upholstered chair. Maddie felt hurt by the question. Not Rose saying ‘So what’ like the hardened woman she pretends to be, but by the first question, ‘What do you want?’. Maddie felt like crying. When was she going to stop being so dismissive with her? What did she ever do to deserve being treated like this? What does it take to break through to Rose? She thought they must be friends after all that had happened. She took her to the village and looked after her. She killed somebody to save her. Why, if she didn’t like her?

Rose leaned forward and asked, “Where is it?”

Maddie took off her hat and took out an envelope. “Right here,” she said.

Maddie stepped off the porch and jumped onto Jangles back. She hoped Rose would say something but she had her nose in the envelope counting the money. Angered by Rose’s lack of appreciation, she urged Jangles toward the road.

Rose stood up and ran from the porch after her. “Maddie, wait!”

Maddie couldn’t resist the opportunity to stab back and

said, "What do you want?"

Rose stood next to Jangles looking up at Maddie. "Thank you, Maddie. I'm glad you are doing better." There was a moment of silence as Rose looked down at the dirt under her bare feet.

"You're welcome." Maddie started off again.

"Wait a minute."

Maddie didn't answer but brought Jangles to a stop.

"You didn't have to tell me about no reward. You could have kept it. I would have never known."

"You didn't have to shoot Tom, but you did and I'm alive because of it. Something I'll always know."

"I've never had that much money before."

"Spend it wisely. It could make a new start for you, Chumani."

Rose smiled at the sound of her real name.

"There is a home for you in the village with your mother, if you want it."

Rose shook her head and said, "No, not for me. I want to belong but I don't want that life." She looked over her shoulder to the old house. Edith came out, cleared her throat and spit over the porch rail. "Don't want this one either."

"Rose, forget about work and come to town tonight. Let's have a nice dinner at the hotel. We can talk about getting you a new life. Maybe even talk about living somewhere else. Would you like to do that?"

"If I'm going to miss a night's work, somebody needs to cover my loss."

"Rose, you have a thousand dollars in your hand. You don't need to work anybody over like that anymore. That's all behind you, starting now."



Rose gives in to the notion of doing something without a hustle and likes the way it feels. "What time should I be there?"

"Six would be fine."

Rose turned back toward the house saying, "See you there."

Maddie couldn't make up her mind about why it was so important to friend Rose, but it was. She seems so strong and independent yet at the same time totally dependent on the generosity of strangers turned lovers. Tough as nails when she spits out venomous barbs yet never realizing that her beauty would easily carry her through silence. She doesn't need to be a bad girl to be better than just good enough. Daddy says that vulgarity and crudeness levels the table for the undereducated lower classes. Maddie wonders if it is true. She knows that Rose deserves a chance to see the other side of life and is committed to giving her that experience.

Maddie polishes a spoon with her napkin and keeps her eye on the door. Half past six and she still hasn't arrived. She feels uncomfortable holding down a table all alone and tries not to engage the looks she is getting from the traveling men in the dining room with her. One man at a table nearby chews with his mouth open, occasionally wiping his heavy mustache with his napkin. He can't seem to take his eyes off of her. Maddie wonders how anybody can be that rude. She thinks maybe she shouldn't have worn a dress and put up her hair. Why did I do it in the first place? To impress a whore? The waiter comes back to the table for the third time.

“Ma’am, are you still waiting on your dinner companion?” Maddie looks up at the homely man with ill-fitting clothes and plastered down hair that is perfectly parted in the center.

“Yes. I’m sure she will be along any time now,” Maddie said. She hoped her voice didn’t reveal her doubt.

“Very good, Ma’am. I’ll check back with you in a few minutes.”

Maddie smiled politely at the waiter as her spirits continued to fall. She did it again, she thought. Every time I think we are forging a friendship Rose has to let me know that I mean absolutely nothing to her. Maddie set down her napkin and walked to the door. Why does she do this? Maddie stepped down into the street with the same injured feeling she had earlier at the whorehouse. She looked up the street hoping to see her, but she didn’t. Walking briskly up the street Maddie mutters to herself, “That’s it. I’m done trying to help people that don’t even like me or appreciate what I’m trying to do for them.” She stomped up the front steps to her home slammed the front door behind her and straight up the stairs to her room. Maddie let her hair down and tried to unlace the back of her dress. Unable to untie it, her anger boiled over and she ripped the dress from her chest. She pushed it down to her waist and wiggled it to the floor.

Exhausted from crying, fatigue overcame her and she laid herself down on the bed. I don’t want to feel like this anymore. I just want to go to sleep and forget I ever knew her.

Jeanita wipes the dust from candleholders in the hallway and listens to the conversation spilling from Mr. Border's study.

"It is all wonderful, Maddie. Let me contact Mrs. Hutchins and have her open the house before you arrive. I will continue to advance her salary and household expenses from here."

"Daddy, I can pay my own way now and I'm not sure I will be needing a housekeeper full time."

Mr. Border leaned forward in his leather wingback chair and said, "She will only come in twice a week as before and let me remind you, the house on North State Parkway is my property and my responsibility."

"I understand. I don't know how long I will stay there as I have no need for a house of that size."

"Nonsense Maddie, it is a fine home and sitting idle is not good for the brownstone. That's not what I intended when I built it. You taking it over is a good thing for me as well as for yourself."

"Daddy, it almost seems vulgar that a single woman lives in a seven thousand square foot mansion by herself, but I do sorely miss it I must admit."

"Then it is settled," her Father said.

Jeanita was speechless at what she was hearing. The house here in Bear Gulch is a fine home indeed, but must seem like a cottage to them, compared to the home they have in Chicago. She began to feel intimidated by the social and financial position of her employer and his daughter, Maddie.

Maddie stands and says, "I have a great number of things to put in order before I leave and one of those things is to

petition you to keep Jeanita on with the household care. She has I am sure, fulfilled her obligation to you and has done a fine job of caring for us and the house. I hope it is your intention to retain her services and pay her a respectable salary for her efforts.”

“She has done remarkably well in that position and is more than welcome to stay on.”

“Thank you, Daddy.”

Maddie’s footsteps are heard by Jeanita on the wood floor of the study and she quickly steps out of the foyer as Maddie leans over to kiss her father’s cheek. Jeanita breathes a sigh of relief, having learned that her future is secure at the Border house.

As hard as it was, Maddie stayed away from the whorehouse on the edge of town, always hoping Rose would try to see her again. The following days went by too soon and the time was drawing near when she would have to stop watching for her and finally board an eastbound train for Chicago. Every night she marked off another day on the calendar. One more week. One more week and Rose will be out of my life forever. One more week and I have to give up on ever being loved by Enapay. One more week and I say good bye to my father. Sadness about the changes left her weary and she didn’t think she had the energy to make it until the week was over, but there was still so much to do. Like watch for Rose, and to find a good home for Jangles. He is an excellent mount and requires an exceptional horseman as his new companion. Her wheels kept turning through the night, but sleep finally relieved her of the misery.

Maddie slept later and harder than she had expected to and after she awoke, called out, "Jeanita, can you fix me some food to travel with, please?"

Jeanita stepped out of the kitchen and into the hall as Maddie came down the stairs. Jeanita had little time to wonder why Maddie was in such a hurry.

Maddie, dressed and carrying her Winchester said, "I'm going out to the Lakota Village today and I might not get home until late."

Jeanita looked concerned and asked, "If you don't mind my asking, why are you going out there?"

"I want to give Jangles a new home with the Lakota, that's why."

"You mean with that boy, Enapay?"

Maddie stopped. Wrestling with an explanation was of no use with Jeanita and she knew it. "I want to see him before I go, and nobody would be better for Jangles than Enapay."

"I understand," Jeanita said then turned back into the kitchen saying, "Let's see what we've got in here that you can take."

"Thank you, Jeanita."

"Just so you know, Rose was here last night."

Maddie excitedly asked, "Is she still here?"

"I didn't see her leave; she might still be sleeping out there for all I know."

Maddie rushed out the back door and threw open the door to the carriage house. Jangles raised his head from hay that had been placed in his stall. She must still be here. Who else would have fed them? Maddie scrambled up the ladder. Rose sat against the back wall of the loft and looked as

though she couldn't think of the proper thing to say about not showing for dinner.

Maddie asked, "What happened to you that night? You didn't show up for dinner."

"I wanted to."

Maddie sat down next to her and waited for her to continue.

"So, what happened? I waited until almost seven. The waiter kept coming around asking for my order and people were staring the whole time. It was very uncomfortable, Rose."

"I'm sorry, but..."

"But what?"

Rose looked away and sighed heavily. "But, look at me. I don't have anything to wear to a nice dinner. Everything I own makes me look like the whore that I am. I was embarrassed to go in there. That's the truth of it. I didn't want to embarrass you too."

Maddie looked at what she was wearing and had to admit she would have brought a lot of attention to herself. Maddie realizes that everything she wears is designed to make a man putty in her hands and they would have been had she shown up.

"I understand, Rose. No sense in crying over spilled milk. Mother used to say that," Maddie said in a forgiving tone.

Rose looked away, her eyes filling with tears.

"I would have been proud and honored to have dinner with you, anywhere, Rose."

"You're just saying that," Rose said in barely a whisper.

Maddie moved closer and put her arm around her. "It's true. I was more hurt than angry that you didn't come. I



want you to be my friend. My best friend. Haven't you noticed," Maddie asked while searching Rose's face.

Rose hung her head and quietly said, "Yes."

"I'm leaving for Chicago soon. I have a new job with the Pinkerton Agency.

"So, what's the point of being best friends if you will be leaving anyway," Rose asked, showing her disappointment.

"I wanted to talk to you about it last other night. Actually, it is one of the main reasons I asked you to dinner."

"About what? What was the reason," Rose asked sounding a little perturbed by the mystery?

"I wanted to know if you'd be interested in living with me in Chicago for a while."

"No. I can't just go off somewhere," Rose exclaimed.

Maddie shook her head and asked, "Why not? What's keeping you here?"

"I have a job here."

"One you hate."

"What would I do in Chicago of all places?"

Maddie smiled and said, "Anything your heart desires."

"But, where would we live?"

"I have a house and it's a fine one too," she said.

"That's a big step. I don't know. I'd have to give that some serious thought."

"You do that. Don't take too long though. I'm leaving at the end of the month." Maddie stood and pulled Rose up on her feet.

Rose looked into Maddie's eyes and asked, "You're serious about this?"

"Yes. Very serious. I want you to come with me. I don't want to be alone."

Maddie started down the ladder first and waited for Rose to climb down. Rose straightened her dress and plucked the straw from her tousled hair.

Rose said, "I'm really going to think about it, Maddie. It might be just the change I need to make."

Maddie didn't hear the confidence in Rose's words that she usually heard, but it was a start and made her more endearing to her.

Rose leaned forward and kissed Maddie's cheek. "Thank you," she said.

Maddie asked, "For what?"

"For not treating me like a whore."

"To me, you are Chumani. A Lakota maiden. My vision of you changed when I saw you with your mother in the village. You stayed and looked after me when I couldn't take care of myself. You didn't have to, but you did. I am indebted to you, Rose."

Rose gathered herself and said, "Well you don't need to get all soft on me. I'm going back to the house to work tonight but I'll be thinkin' about that trip to Chicago." Rose swung open the door of the carriage house.

"You do that," Maddie said.

Rose stepped through the doors and Maddie felt perfectly satisfied. Satisfied with Rose's explanation for why she didn't show. Satisfied that she'd convinced Rose to think about going with her. Satisfied with Rose's apology.

"Well Jangles, maybe she's going to turn the corner and quit whoring and start living."

She patted Jangles on the neck and listened to him grinding up the grain she had just given him. She knew she would miss the horse that had learned so much over the past

year and had given her everything he had, to become the best trained horse she ever knew. Maddie didn't want him to end up back at Whitman's livery where just anybody could buy him and maybe not care for him as he should be. She knew that the best place for him was with the Lakota villagers and hopefully with Enapay in particular. He could be happy with the Lakota. They have a kinship with their horses and revere them in a special way.

With finality Maddie said to her horse, "Well Jangles, we're going for one last ride together. You are going to live with the Lakota."

She looked over at the carriage horse and knew the old girl would be a horrible ride on a trip of that distance and decided that the best thing to do would be to see Mr. Whitman on the way out of town and rent a horse for the ride back. Maddie walked back to the house feeling restored. She was happy that Rose finally opened up to her and hopefully accepts her invitation to see the world from a different point of view. Her step was light and her disposition was cheery once again.

She opened the back door to find Jeanita in the kitchen. Jeanita asked, "Was she still there?"

"Yes, she sure was."

"Did you get to talk things over?"

"Yes, and it went really great."

Jeanita said, "You look much better."

Maddie smiled and said, "I feel so much better. I think I convinced her to come with me to Chicago."

"Rose, in Chicago?"

"Yes. I think she would thrive there. There are a lot of options open to a woman like her in a town like Chicago."

“I packed some things for your ride out to the village.”

“Thank you Jeanita.”

“You just be careful out there,” Jeanita warned.

Maddie finds it an easy ride across the grassy plains with a gentle breeze at her back. “No need to be in a hurry,” she says out loud. This is the last time the pair of them would make this journey to the village together. She saw the familiar dome hill ahead and decided to go over it to stop at the old homestead for a restful break. She led Jangles and Mr. Whitman’s horse to the creek to be watered. Maddie looked back at the sad little house and thought about being there with Rose and smoking cigarettes.

She knelt at the creek’s edge and cupped cool water in her hands and splashed it on her face, remembering clearly what happened in the water just a few feet from where she is now. She ached to have that moment back. She wondered if Enapay felt the same way. She pulled both horses back from the water, leading them to the hitch at the lean-to shed. Maddie took the bag Jeanita filled, and carried it into the old house where a table was waiting to be used again.

She saw an ash on the floor next to the chair where Rose had sat and missed her. Maddie giggled to herself, almost hearing Rose’s voice, “Have you ever had a man lay between your legs?” Maddie murmured out loud, “Not yet, but I want to.” Even though she was completely alone, she looked around to be certain no one heard her confession. She opened the bag to find roast beef and fresh bread. Hungrily, she tore at the bread and shredded the beef with her teeth. When she had finished, she slowly walked to the creek to wash away the meal that filled her belly and the fantasy that filled her head.

Maddie saw the village ahead and dreaded the thought of saying goodbye to Jangles. She slowed to a stop and got down from his back. She put her arms around his neck and pressed her head against his. She looked over her shoulder to the village and admired the living civilization on the plains. She saw livestock grazing and the Lakota moving about in their daily tasks. She smiled as she watched children chasing each other around the tipi. She was ready and climbed up on Jangles for the last time. She clicked her tongue into her cheek and moved on.

Maddie reaches the outer edge of the village and gets down from her horse, leading both along the pathway to MaKawee's tipi. Two women step aside to let her pass in a welcoming gesture. Maddie looks behind her to find several children following behind. She recognizes them and stops.

"Hello, my friends." The children smile and seem to understand her greeting.

MaKawee throws back the flap door on her tipi, stepping out to see who is in the village. Maddie finds herself facing a struggle to communicate her purpose for coming there. The children watch intently as Maddie points to Jangles.

"I want to leave my horse with the Lakota." Maddie waves her arm in an over dramatic sweep. "I am going on a long journey and cannot take him with me." Maddie feels silly and the children's laughter confirms it. MaKawee watches with great amusement as Maddie struggles for words.

A young boy of around ten years old tells MaKawee that he thinks she wants to give away her horse. MaKawee looks astonished and asks the boy why anyone would want



to give away a valuable animal like him. The boy shrugs his shoulders and looks down the pathway where Enapay is walking toward them.

The children get excited and call out his name as they rush up to the handsome hunter. He pats them all on the head and smiles broadly as he locks eyes with Maddie. She watches as he politely gives the children the attention they crave from him and patiently awaits the moment he turns his attention to her. She is just as excited on the inside as the children, but finds enough restraint to manage her dignity. Enapay says something that makes them laugh and turn their eyes to Maddie. She doesn't know what he said but feels a blush flood across her face. Enapay moves slowly toward Maddie and MaKawee with six children surrounding and moving with him as if they are somehow attached.

Maddie removes Jangles' saddle and throws it onto the back of Mr. Whitman's horse. She leads Jangles to Enapay and hands him the reins attached to the hackamore bridle. She waits for him to understand what she is doing. He looks surprised but knows Jangles is a gift that must be cared for with great respect and accepts, not wanting to disrespect the special friendship he has with Maddie.

She hangs the stirrup on the saddle horn and draws the cinch tight under the rented gelding's belly. Enapay knows that means she is leaving soon and his time with her will be short. She watches his reactions and wonders if he will try to salvage what little time is left or let it fade away.

He gestures with his hand for her to come to him. Maddie doesn't feel her feet moving under her, but knows she is floating closer and closer until she is filled with the scent of



him. Face to face they stand smiling into the other's presence that excludes the village, the children, MaKawee and time. He swings up on Jangles back and extends his hand down to Maddie. She reaches for it and is swung up behind him. Jangles carries them both away from the village at a slow canter. He brings the horse to a stop in waist high grass that is already turning brown in the season. Maddie slides down with Enapay wasting no time to join her. He wraps his arms around her and holds her close, stroking her hair. Maddie lays her face against his warm chest and feels his excitement build. She wants to feel helpless against what she is sure is going to happen, but knows she can't blame what comes next on uncontrolled passion. She is ready to beg to be free of self-restraint. She has waited long enough. They drop to their knees in the tall grass and she rolls onto her back. Alone in the world on the very last day, this one chance is all there is. She pushes against him and lets out a long sensual moan that needed no interpretation. In a moment they were intertwined with nothing between them but the sweat of their pleasure. Maddie can barely catch her breath as she climbs higher and higher with each new plateau of pleasure, pain and discovery. When she thought she could bare no more, she exploded again and again. Exhausted they fell. She listened to his breathing and felt his pounding heart slowly return to a steady even beat like the ceremonial drumming she heard from the village the first time she found it.

She wanted to lay with him there in the afternoon sun forever, but that was not to be. She knew it and so did he. Bittersweet as it was, they finally had their day.

Riding Mr. Whitman's horse was no great pleasure, but easy enough to live with. Maddie had plenty to think about on the long ride to Bear Gulch. She felt sad that she wasn't on her old friend Jangles and sad that this was the last ride across the plains. She still felt Enapay inside her and knew that was something that would stay with her for a very long time. It was almost dark when she led the horse into Mr. Whitman's livery stable and felt conclusion drawing closer with each step down the main street that led to her father's house. She wondered if Rose would come with her to Chicago or if she would have to start this new adventure without her.

It frustrated her that Rose hadn't followed through with dinner that night and still hasn't told her she is done with whoring once and for all. "What is wrong with that girl?" she asked out loud to herself.

Maddie entered the front door and called out, "Jeanita, I'm home."

Jeanita came down the stairs to greet her. "You're back. Did it go as well as you expected?"

Maddie said, "Much better than I could have hoped, Jeanita."

"Good." Jeanita had questions, but knew it wasn't her place to pry so she left it alone.

As Maddie carried her Winchester and holster up the stairs to her room, she asked, "Have you heard anything from Rose?"

Jeanita said, "Yes, I have. She asked what I thought about her going to Chicago with you."

"What did you say?"

"I told her I thought it would be a good experience for her and that she should do it."

"And," Maddie asked.

"And what?"

"What did she say? Is she going to do it or not?"

Jeanita knew Maddie was hoping Rose would go and didn't want to disappoint her. "Well, to be honest about it, she's on the fence with it, but I think she's going to come around to her senses and go with you."

Maddie, filled both with hope and frustration said, "She'd better hurry up and decide. The train leaves with me on it in just a couple of days."

"I have an idea. How about this. If we don't hear from her by tomorrow night, we take the carriage and go talk to her," Jeanita suggested.

Maddie thought about it for a second and said, "We can do that, but it's cutting it awfully close."

With finality Jeanita said, "Then, that's what we are going to do."

"Where's Daddy?"

"He won't be home until late tonight. He's with Miss Meade."

Maddie burrowed her brow and said, "I hope she isn't just interested in his money."

"I think she genuinely cares for your father and from the changes I've seen in him, I'd say that is a good thing."

"It's just that I won't be here to keep an eye on things and ..."

"I don't think you need to keep your eye on anything but the future before you."

"You are probably right, but ..."

"There is no fun, Madhe."

Madhe sat in the bath, washing the dusty sweat from her face and the back of her neck. She squeezed the washcloth in her hand, letting the trail of water run down her chest, between her breasts and wished it was Enayay's lips, once again following the path to her heart. Bittersweet feelings washed over her briefly, but faded with a smile of contentment. She stepped out of the tub, leaving a wet trail on the floor behind her as she walked to her room, wrapped in an oversized towel.

Madhe stood next to her bed, pulling a cotton sleeping gown over her head and stopped before letting it drop over her shoulders. She examined her naked body in the mirror and even from across the room it looked exactly as before. It wasn't. Not in Madhe's mind. She will never be as she was before. There was no going back. Laying with Enayay in the sun pushed her past the threshold of a new understanding.

The night became day again and the hours ticked by ever so slowly. In the afternoon when she could take it no longer, Madhe went down the stairs in search of Jeanita. "Jeanita," Madhe called out as she walked through the house toward the kitchen. She found her on hands and knees working with a scrub brush on the floor in front of the stove. "I want to go see Rose. I can't wait any more," Madhe said.

Noting the weariness in Madhe's voice, Jeanita stood up and asked, "Can you give me two minutes to dump this pail and change into something presentable?"

"I'll get the carriage."

Jeanita threw the dirty water out of the back door and said, "I'll be right out."

Maddie sat in the carriage with the reins in her hands as Jeanita strolled toward her. She couldn't help but wonder how Jeanita managed to look so beautiful and fresh at a moments notice with so little effort. Who would ever have known a woman who carried herself with such grace and dignity, could have ever been a whore? She slapped the reins on the mare's back and with a sudden start, rolled down the street. Maddie pulled back on the reins and kept the mare at a slow walk, prolonging the rejection she expects from Rose.

The old house finally came into view and Maddie suddenly felt as though she wanted to turn around and go back. Why was it so important that Rose accompany her to Chicago anyway? If Rose wants to stay in this shack with that tobacco spitting Edith, why shouldn't she be able to? If she can't see the opportunity before her she has no one to blame but herself, Maddie thought and then wondered if she had said it out loud. She looked over at Jeanita and assumed she had not.

She stopped the carriage where a buckskin was tied to the porch rail. Before they could climb down from the carriage, Edith stepped out of the wide-open door.

"If yer lookin' for Rose, she a bit occupied right now."

"I just need to speak with her for a moment," Maddie said.

"I'm guessin' you didn't hear me good," Edith said in a gruff tone. She leaned over the rail and spit.

"How long do you think it might be," Jeanita asked.

"Depends on how good she is and how bad he wants it. Sometimes it's just a minute or two and other times it could be a while longer. Hard to say."

Maddie turns to Jeanita and asks, "Should we wait or go home?"

Jeanita was about to reply when Rose walked out of the door arm in arm with an older man that looked to be in his fifties. He stepped off the porch and onto his buckskin trying not to look the women in the eye.

"Say hello to the Mrs. for me," Rose shouted as the man quickly rode away.

"Are you coming to Chicago with me?"

Edith sat down in the smelly worn chair and said, "Me and the other gals think it is a good idea fer you to be going."

"And why is that," Rose asked. Maddie could see that Rose felt pressured to commit.

"Well, fer one thing we'd like to have a chance to get at some of them bucks. As long as you're around, we don't stand a chance. Hard to make a livin' here with you takin' em all."

"What do you say Rose, are you coming?"

Rose looked down at the ground and took a deep breath. Maddie refrained from saying another word until she got an answer one way or another. Jeanita laid her hand on Maddie's shoulder and said, "Rose needs to sort this out on her own. Maybe we should leave her to think it over."

Maddie grabbed the reins and Rose, seeing they were about to leave, blurted out, "I'm scared."

"Of what?"



“Maddie, I ain’t never been no place nice. I wouldn’t know how to be. How to act. I don’t know anything about bein’ all proper and such.”

Maddie said, “You’ll never know if you don’t try.” Rose looked into Maddie’s eyes, and then to Jeanita, for reassurance and encouragement that this might be the best thing to do.

“Train boards in the morning, Rose,” Maddie said as she turned the carriage toward town.

They drove in silence until they turned onto Main St. “Do you think she’ll show up?”

“I don’t know. I think she wants to though,” Jeanita answered.



## Chapter Thirteen

### Chicago

The carriage waited patiently outside of the front gate where Mr. Border and Jeanita loaded the only trunk Maddie had packed for the train ride to Chicago. With no word from Rose and her nerves on edge, Maddie stepped out wearing a skirt for the first time since the dinner date with the whore that never materialized. A smart jacket covered her shoulders on the cool September morning that was the beginning to her adult life and career in Chicago.

Mr. Border watched his daughter admiringly as she stepped through the gate. "You look absolutely beautiful, Maddie. I'm so proud to be your father," he said.

"Thank you, Daddy," Maddie said as she stepped up into the carriage where Jeanita was already holding the reins.

"Jeanita will drive you to the station. The porter will take care of your trunk. Are you ready for this?"

"As ready as I'm ever going to be."

"If you aren't out somewhere hunting down criminals at Christmas, I'll come to Chicago for the holidays."

"That would be wonderful, Daddy," Maddie said. Jeanita slapped the reins and they started with a jerk. Maddie looked over her shoulder and said, "I'll write when I arrive. I'll miss you."

"I love you Maddie."

"I love you too, Daddy."

Maddie took a deep breath and gave Jeanita a nervous smile. She was filled with excitement that she wished she was sharing with Rose but she was nowhere in sight and Jeanita hadn't heard a word from her either.

"You packed so light. Are you sure you have everything you'll need," Jeanita asked?

Maddie opened her jacket to one side revealing a new shoulder holster and said, "I have everything that matters. I plan to shop for new clothes when I get home."

"Home?"

"Yes, home. Bear Gulch is a fine place for Daddy, but Chicago will always be home to me. The brownstone on North State Parkway was built just before I was born and it is the only other house I have ever lived in. I'm excited to see it again."

"I'm sure it is as lovely as when you left it," Jeanita said as they rolled around the corner and past Mr. Border's bank.

"I just wish that hard headed Rose was going with me," Maddie said with minor agitation in her voice.

Jeanita said, "A big change like that would be a tough decision for a gal like Rose. I know she wanted to come with you, but she doesn't know any other way of life."

Maddie saw the train idly waiting at the station and knew it was too late for Rose to miraculously appear.

Jeanita stopped the carriage alongside of the platform and said, "This is it. I wish the best to you, Maddie and hope to see you again."

The porter rushed to the carriage and dragged her trunk from the back of the carriage to the train.

Maddie sighed. "Thank you for everything you have done for me and Daddy. Please look after him for me and," ... she reached into her inside breast pocket and brought out a folded sheet of paper. "Please write to me and keep me posted about his romance or whatever it is with Miss Meade."

"Don't worry, I'm sure he will be fine with whatever direction it takes."

Maddie leaned into a hug with her and said, "Good bye Jeanita."

Jeanita waited after Maddie got out of the carriage and stepped into the station before she drove away.

Maddie stepped up to the ticket window. "Good morning," said the ticket agent.

"Good morning. You should have a ticket to Chicago for me. My name is Madison Border."

The agent looked down at his desk and replied, "Yes Ma'am, I do. You are in compartment number four. I believe it is in the first car behind the dining compartment. Complimentary meals are included." He handed Maddie the tickets and meal voucher packet. "Have a nice trip," he added.

"Thank you, sir. Oh, one more thing. How long do I have before we leave?"

The agent looked over the top of his glasses at the clock on the wall and said, "Your train is boarding now and will depart on the half hour."

Maddie went out to the platform and climbed on board. After finding her compartment, she anxiously fidgeted in her seat, when she heard a familiar voice outside on the platform.

"Anybody know what I have to do to get a ticket for this train?"

She looked out of the window to see Rose with the conductor. Maddie rushed out of her compartment to meet her.

Rose was entering the doors of the station when Maddie got off the train and called out, "Rose!"

Rose staggered as she turned to face her. Maddie was so happy to see her that she didn't care that she was puffy faced and sloppily drunk.

"I'm here, Maddie. Ready to go to Chicago and paint the town red."

"I'm so happy you came, Rose. I was certain you weren't coming."

"Well I am," Rose slurred.

"Let me go in with you and get your ticket."

"I'll let you. I ain't never rode on a train before."

"There's a first time for everything," Maddie said with joy in her voice for the first time today.

Maddie stepped up to the ticket window and arranged for Rose to share the compartment with her as she sat on a bench across the room where she caught the attention of a traveling salesman with an acne pocked complexion. He was just starting a conversation when Maddie returned with



her ticket and ushered Rose out to the platform. He followed closely behind. He was boarding the general seating coach and Rose started off in his direction. Maddie grabbed her by the arm and said, "We are this way."

They made their way to the compartment and Rose exclaimed, "Oh my lord, what the hell is this?"

Maddie smiled and sat down saying, "It's a private compartment, courtesy of the Pinkerton's Detective Agency."

Thoroughly impressed, Rose sat down across from her. She ran her hand across the beautifully upholstered seat while she took in the oak panels and luxurious wall covering below the wide window. "They sure know how to put on the dog," she said.

"I'm glad you approve."

"I do. A gal could get used to all this."

The train began to roll and blew it's whistle on the way out of the station. Rose slid closer to the window, peering out for one last look at Bear Gulch.

"This is much more than I expected, that's for sure," she said.

Rose looked around the compartment one more time. "It's so much nicer than I thought it would be, and a private car to boot."

Maddie kept her thoughts to herself. She didn't want to embarrass Rose by bringing attention to the fact she had never been on a train before, let alone a private compartment. She was thrilled, knowing what lay ahead for Rose in the coming days. She couldn't wait to see her reaction to Chicago and the brownstone that would become

home to the girl that until this morning, lived in a rundown brothel on the seamy edge of town.

First order of business upon their arrival would be to dress Rose properly for the city and get her acclimated to the environmental differences. Maddie had high hopes of a successful transformation that could make all the difference in the world for Rose's future. She looked over and saw her head start to drop as she fell into a doze. Rose caught herself and jerked her head upright. She weakly smiled at Maddie with heavy eyes and struggled to keep them open.

"It's going to be a long ride. Close your eyes and get some rest." That was all Rose needed to hear and quickly surrendered to a much-needed sleep.

Maddie looked out of the window at the still familiar plains and thought about everything that happened since the last time she rode a train across them. She remembered the handsome young boy whose shirt she wore when she trudged through the snow, away from the horrible event that took her mother away from her and Daddy.

Her thoughts turned to Enapay. A sadness ripped through her guts at the thought of never seeing him again and wondered what she may have left behind. She looked over at Rose and saw rapid eye movement under her lids and drool on her chin. She wanted to wipe it away with a handkerchief, but didn't want to disturb her. Instead, she closed her eyes hoping to shut out the past for the next few hundred miles.

A knock on the compartment door from the conductor announced the opening of the dining car for dinner service. Rose stirred and stretched. While still yawning she asked, "There is a dining car?"

Maddie smiled at Rose's surprise and said, "Yes. We can go and order dinner with all the other first-class passengers on board."

"Rose sat up straight and asked, "Don't they let anybody else eat there?"

Maddie chuckled and said, "Sure they do, if you can afford it. The prices are pretty high on a train."

"Well, I've got plenty of money. I want to go. I haven't eaten anything since yesterday," Rose said.

They walked to the dining room and Rose found herself in an elegant dining room with linen tablecloths, heavy china, beautiful glassware and silver utensils on table settings for two. They sat themselves at a table and immediately a waiter came with a pitcher of water and poured them each a glass before leaving them with menus.

Rose picked up the menu and leaned forward and quietly said to Maddie, "Fancy." Rose looked over the menu and exclaimed, "I could eat for a week on what they want for one dinner."

"I told you it was expensive to eat on the train."

Rose raised an eyebrow and mimicked high society women saying, "I'm worth it and expect only the best."

Maddie laughed out loud and said, "Yes you are, Rose."

Two gentlemen in their thirties seated across the car from them were intrigued by Maddie and Rose enough to initiate small talk. One, a short thick man with a baby face disguised by a mustache asked, "Excuse me, but are you two lovely ladies traveling unescorted?"

Rose said to Maddie, "I've got this." She turned to the men and asked, "How is that any of your damned business?"

The man was taken aback and fumbled for words. "I, I uh was just wondering, that's all."

"You'll be wondering what ever happened to the shit between your legs if you say anything more. Good day, sir."

The man was speechless and red in the face with embarrassment and did not seek another glance in their direction for the remainder of his meal. Maddie finished her dinner and suggested to Rose that they go back to their compartment.

Rose looked over at the thick little business man and said, "Just a minute, Maddie."

Rose dabbed her lips with her napkin, stood up and stepped over to the table across the center way. "Don't feel bad, little man. I'm sure you are used to rejection from women by now."

The man set down his fork, pushing a piece of apple pie away and looked up at Rose. With his composure regained, he said, "Actually, I am not accustomed to having my good intentions dismissed as I am a very successful man involved in many profitable ventures. Most women know after talking with me a few moments that if I want, I can lavish them with the finest of luxuries and they might even accompany me to exotic locations around the world. So, actually, this is a first."

Rose cocked her head to one side and said, "Then I suppose I shall always be remembered."

With a flirtatious grin, he looked her over and said, "That you will."

"Good evening, sir."

He reaches into his breast pocket and hands her an expensive looking embossed business card and says, "Good evening to you my dear as well. My name is Roswell Fykes. If you are ever in Chicago, you can find me at this address."

"And, why should I want to find you?"

"I open doors that few can enter." He stood and left the dining car at a relaxed pace in deliberate fashion. Rose did not take the bait.

Maddie said, "Let's go."

They left the dining car and upon reaching their compartment, saw Roswell Fykes standing in the doorway of his own compartment.

"I must admit, he is more intriguing than I expected," Rose said.

"Forget it Rose. You aren't whoring anymore and besides; you have your own money now." Still, Rose couldn't resist flashing him a smile before closing the door. With wide comfortable seats made for two people on each side, they had no trouble getting settled for the ride through the night.

"Good night, Rose," Maddie said with a yawn.

Good night, Maddie. Thank you for everything."

"There is nothing to thank me for."

"Yes, there is. I would never be able to strike out on my own and make a change like this."

"You did it on your own," said Maddie.

Rose shook her head. "No, I didn't."

"Yes, you did. I didn't make you do it. I merely suggested you use the reward money to make a fresh start and it just so happened that I was going off to Chicago."

Abruptly sitting upright Rose said, "This is so exciting, I don't know if I will be able to sleep."

Maddie sat up too and said, "I'll be honest. I wanted you to come with me more than you know. You are my friend and I want to be with a friend. It's a new beginning for me too. I know we are going to my old home but it is different this time. I need you, Rose, and that is the truth."

Rose smiled and coyly said, "Aww, that's so sweet. We aren't going to kiss now, are we?"

Maddie almost blushed with embarrassment. "Good night, Rose." They settled into the swaying motion of the train that helped them both drift off to sleep.

Maddie had been up for an hour and quietly watched the sun rise when the train rolled into a busy station. Rose stirred and asked, "Where are we?"

"Omaha."

Rose leaned toward the window. "I've never seen Omaha before."

Maddie said, "Well, it's nothing special. Just a place on the way to somewhere else."

"I've heard about it though."

"You will get your chance to see it because we change trains here and our next train doesn't go until tomorrow."

Rose asked, "So we are staying overnight?"

"Yes, but we leave early," Maddie said as she stood to get off of the train.

"What about our belongings," Rose asked.

"The porter will make certain that our trunks get on the right train," Maddie told her.



"I'm hungry," Rose grumbled as they stepped onto the platform.

"Me too. Let's get to the hotel and order breakfast." Together they moved through the street dodging foot and carriage traffic while searching for a hotel Maddie's father had recommended.

"What hotel are we looking for," asked Rose.

"The Vendome Hotel," Maddie said distracted by the military presence. Soldiers seemed to be on every corner and in almost every business they passed along the way.

Rose pointed across the street. "There it is."

They carefully navigated their way across the street as carriages and wagons rolled through without any apparent direction flow.

"Good Lord," Rose exclaimed after they reached the safety of the walkway in front of the grand entrance to the Vendome Hotel.

Maddie set a small carpet bag at her feet when she reached the registration desk.

A man behind the counter smiled and said, "Good morning. Will you be checking in?"

"Yes. We would like a room for tonight please," Maddie said.

He looked to Rose and asked, "Would you like a room as well, Ma'am?"

Rose had started to speak but Maddie interrupted and spoke directly to the clerk. "We will be sharing one room. Thank you."

"Very well." He reached for a key hanging behind him and said, "You will be in room number three eleven. That will be sixteen dollars for a two person stay."

As Maddie counted out the money, a voice said, "Good morning ladies, what a pleasant surprise."

They turned to find Roswell Fykes standing behind them. They stepped away from the desk and coolly returned the greeting on their way to the dining room.

As they finished their breakfast amongst businessmen and various other travelers, Rose noticed that from across the room, Roswell Fykes stole occasional glances at the two.

"If he doesn't stop staring, I'm going to go over there and humiliate the shit out of him," Rose said under her breath while glaring back at him.

"Just ignore him. We still have a long way to travel before we reach Chicago," Maddie said.

"Look at this," Rose said with glee in her voice as a woman casually strolled over to him.

"What?"

"I know a whore when I see one and she just found her mark."

The flashy looking woman sat down after Roswell pulled out a chair for her. It was obvious to Rose that he had never seen her before in his life.

"He's practically drooling over there," she said.

"What do you care?"

"I don't."

"If he's spending time with her, he'll be too busy to bother us," Maddie jokingly said.

"The whole thing looks ridiculous from over here. I never really realized how stupid men look and behave from this point of view. I mean, before I was too busy firing them up to get to their paycheck to see it all so clear." Rose reached

across the table, taking Maddie's hands in hers and said, "Thank you, Maddie."

"For what now?"

"Helping me to see how desperate whores and their marks really are. It's pathetic."

"Glad to see you are over it."

"I am, but between you and me, I could have had every dime of his last night on the train."

Still holding each other's hands, Roswell Fykes looks over and knowingly smiles.

Rose leans across the table and quietly exclaims, "That son-of-a-bitch thinks we are together."

"We are together."

"No. He thinks we are together, together."

Maddie is completely lost and has no idea what she is talking about.

"What do you mean," she asks.

"Sweet Jesus, Maddie. He thinks we are lovers!"

Maddie tries to get a handle on how that could even be.

"Rose, we are both women. It's impossible, isn't it?"

"No. It is very possible and more common than you might imagine."

"I've never heard of such a thing."

Rose let go of Maddie's hands, leaned back in her chair and said, "It's not the kind of thing anyone will admit to."

The waiter stops at their table and asks to clear it if they are finished. Maddie smiled up at him and said, "Thank you."

The waiter said, "One of our customers, the man over there, is getting your check. Thank you for letting me serve you this morning." He continued on his way to the kitchen

with Rose and Maddie smiling at one another in bewilderment.

“What is wrong with that man,” Rose sarcastically asked.

They left the dining room and upon entering the lobby saw a platoon of soldiers march past the window on the street outside. “What in the world is going on,” asked Maddie

A very tall older gentleman who heard her said, “They came here this past July to stop the railroad riots, but they are going to stay in a permanent installation on the edge of town. There has been enormous unrest among the people and the Indians and the government thinks it best to stay and protect the citizens.”

“Which ones, the whites or the Indians,” Rose asked with bitterness erupting from within.

“The whites of course,” the gentleman said.

Maddie saw that Rose was becoming angry and said, “Let’s go and see our room.”

She grabbed Rose by the arm and together they climbed the wide staircase to the third floor. Maddie turned the key in the door and stepped inside. Rose pulled the pins from her hat and tossed it to a wingback chair by the window.

“Did you hear what he said?”

“Yes, I did and you’ll hear more of that kind of sentiment before we reach Chicago, I’m sure,” Maddie said, looking out at the street below.

Rose plopped down on the bed, crossing her legs at her ankles and resting her back against the headboard. “I hope they aren’t hateful toward me when we get to Chicago,” she said.

Maddie turned away from the window and sat on the edge of the bed. "Nobody is going to be hateful to you in Chicago, Rose. Chicago is much bigger, more sophisticated and culturally diverse than this little cow town."

"Little. I've never been in a city this big before."

"Then you are in for the surprise of your life. Just wait until you see it for yourself. And the lake, it's huge like the sea but fresh water and delightful to look upon."

"I hope I'm going to fit in and like it there," Rose said, looking sad and a little intimidated.

"Not only will you fit in and like it there, they will love you Rose. I promise."

Rose sat up and said, "Let's go walk around town." She sprang up from the bed and headed to the door.

Rose and Maddie walked about the streets, occasionally seeing something of interest in shop windows along the way. Rose saw a hat in a window and motioned for Maddie to come inside, just to see what they wanted for it. When they came out, she was wearing a stylish hat with a ribbon piece that trailed behind to her shoulders.

"You must really like the way you look in that head piece," Maddie jokingly said.

"Whatever makes you say that?"

"Well, you look at yourself in every window we pass." They both laughed and continued on their way.

"Will you just look at all these handsome soldiers," Rose said looking over her shoulder at the two soldiers that passed them on the walkway.

"They are nice looking in their uniforms."

"Yes, and I'm sure they have money in their pockets too," Rose said with a mischievous tone.

“No Rose, remember that’s behind you now.”

“I know, I was just saying is all.”

Music spilled out onto the street as they passed a saloon and the smell of beer wafted past their noses.

“My that smells horrible,” Maddie said.

“Does not.”

“Yes, it does.”

“I wanna go in and have a shot of whiskey,” Rose announced.

“You’ll be going alone if you do.”

“Fine, I will then,” Rose said and stepped inside.

Maddie threw her hands in the air and stepped inside behind her, shaking her head with disapproval. By the time Rose reached the bar she had already caught the attention of every man there.

The bartender stepped up and asked, “What’ll it be?”

A shot of whiskey for me and, uh, make that two,” she said

when Maddie stepped up beside her, Rose said, “I thought I was drinkin’ alone.”

Maddie looked around at all of the ogling men and said, “You are. I’m just waiting for you, that’s all.”

The bartender set down the two shots and Rose tipped back the glass and drained it in one big gulp.

“This one is yours. It’ll warm your belly.”

Maddie said, “My belly doesn’t need any warming, thank you very much.”

Rose shouted down the bar for the barkeeper to bring her another. “Suit yourself, but I’m not leaving until you drink it. Even if it takes all night,” said Rose.

“I really don’t want to.”



“Just do it so we can go.” She picked up a second shot and drained it as well. “Maddie, if you don’t drink it, I’m gonna have to order another one.”

Maddie stood looking at the glass and back to Rose. Rose raised her glass and started to call the bartender back but Maddie said, “Alright. I’ll do it if you promise we can leave as soon as I do.”

“I promise.”

Maddie lifted the glass to her lips and stopped to smell it. She wrinkled her nose and shook her head. “How can anyone drink this?”

“Maybe I should get another while you decide what to do with it.”

“No. No. I’ll drink it.”

“The best way to do it is all at once. Believe me it’s better that way.”

Maddie raised up the glass and poured it down her throat. Rose was staring at her, waiting for her to start choking and gasping for air. Maddie set the glass down and said, “Barkeeper, bring me another.”

Rose was stunned. He returned with the bottle, and refilled her glass. Maddie picked it up and swallowed it in one smooth gulp. She slammed the glass on the bar and said, “Let’s go, Rose.”

Rose looked at Maddie with total astonishment and said to the bar tender, “I believe we are done here.”

Back out on the street Rose said, “I didn’t think you were really going to drink it. Let alone down two of them.”

Maddie said, “I didn’t see any other way to end it once and for all.”

“You’ve got salt girl, that’s for sure.”

"It reminded me of the day I smoked one of your cigarettes at the old homestead by the creek."

"I remember that. I remember getting under your skin about laying with a boy too. Remember that?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Well what?"

"You know. Did Enapay feed you the snake?"

"What?"

"Did you do it with Enapay."

"What a crude thing to ask. You know it isn't any of your business."

Rose laughed out loud in Maddie's face with the whiskey on her breath, "You did."

Maddie defiantly said, "If I did, I wouldn't say anyway. Maddie stopped and said, "I'm feeling a little warm."

Rose was busy looking at a soldier walking their way. "I told you it'd warm your belly. Puts me in the mood to kiss somebody, you know like that good lookin' soldier boy right there."

"Rose, don't even think about doing anything."

"I'm not gonna do anything."

The soldier passed and Rose said, "Good afternoon."

She looked to Maddie who had been holding her breath and said, "See, I was nice."

"Let's just get back to the hotel. I think I want to lay down."

When they got back to the room Maddie lay face down on the bed. "Rose, can you get drunk on just two little shots of whiskey?"

Rose fell back on the bed beside her and said, "If you aren't used to it, you can."

"I'm not used to it at all," Maddie said.

"That's how it is the first time," Rose said gently as she stroked Maddie's hair.

"That's how what is?"

"The first time you drink whiskey or kiss a man or shoot a gun or anything else. You have to get used to it."

Maddie rolled over. "I like kissing. Enapay kissed me a lot."

A peculiar look came across Rose's face. "It made you wet between your legs too, didn't it?"

"Yes. Wait. I can't believe you just said that."

"You must have forgotten that until a few days ago, I was a whore and a damned good one at that."

"I know you were the prettiest whore around, but that's over with now," Maddie quietly said.

"Yes. From now on I'm only going to do it if I really like someone and I want to because I feel like it. That's how I feel right now. Whiskey does that to me."

"Whiskey makes you want to kiss and everything," Maddie asked?

Rose rolled over on her side away from Maddie. "Yes," she answered. They fell into silence and drifted off to sleep.

Maddie woke first and made her way down the hall to freshen up before dinner. When she returned, Rose was sitting in the chair by the window smoking.

Maddie asked, "Do you want to freshen up? I found where you can, right down the hall."

Rose stood. "Which way?"

“Go to the left, about halfway. You’ll see a door that says women only.”

Dinner was awkward for Maddie as Rose was unusually quiet and sullen. Afterward on their way back up to the room Maddie asked if something was wrong.

“No. Everything is fine.”

“Are you sure? You don’t seem like yourself. You’ve been distant and moody since we got up from our nap this afternoon.”

“It’s nothing. Nothing you would understand anyway.”

Maddie turned the key in the door and stepped through. Rose went straight to the chair and rolled tobacco. Rose angrily said, “Damn it all, I need a stick match and I’m all out. I have to go to the lobby and get some. I’ll be right back.”

Maddie wondered what was eating Rose and was also concerned about what to sleep in since she was sharing her bed with another woman. Maddie was a little worried that her silk all in one combination might be too revealing and wished she had thought to carry a chemise in her carpetbag. She decided that she was being silly and that Rose wasn’t going to care one way or another what Maddie wore to sleep in.

Rose returned in much better spirits and went straight away to the chair and struck a wooden stick match to her freshly rolled tobacco. Maddie asked if she would make one for her too. Rose handed her the lit cigarette and started rolling another for herself.

“Do you suppose we should open the window and let the smoke out,” Maddie asked. Without answering, Rose

pushed the window open. "Thank you." Maddie came and stood next to Rose who was still rolling in the chair.

"The breeze feels good. It's a little warm in here," Maddie said as Rose struck another match. She tossed the match into a glass ashtray that had the Vendome Hotel of Omaha, Nebraska printed on the bottom.

"I'm taking that ashtray with me when we leave tomorrow," Rose said with certainty. She didn't get the argument she expected from Maddie. What's the point? All she would accomplish is to repeat what Rose already knew. That it isn't right to steal. Rose wiped across her eye with the back of her hand.

"Got smoke in my eye. Burn's like hell when that happens," she said. Maddie closed her eyes and took another puff from the one she held in her hand.

Rose stubbed hers out in the glass ashtray and said, "Look at what I've got."

She brought out a half-pint bottle of whiskey and said, "I had to go into the hotel bar to get matches and thought, what the hell. Want to have a drink with me?"

"We don't have any glasses," Maddie said.

Rose opened the whiskey and drank straight from the bottle. "We don't need a glass." She handed it up to Maddie.

She shook her head and smiled at Rose's crude but good-natured approach to life then tipped the bottle back and swallowed a mouthful. "We are sure to sleep like babies tonight," Maddie said, while wiping the whiskey off of her chin.

Rose looked down at her clothes and said, "I don't want to sleep in my clothes and ruin them for tomorrow. I hope you aren't bashful, because I've got nothing on under here."

Maddie burst into laughter almost spitting out her second swallow of the throat burning whiskey from the hotel bar. "What's so funny?"

"Before you got back from getting the matches, I was wondering if my combination was too revealing to wear to bed tonight. My guess is that it is not," said Maddie, still chuckling.

"You wear those new combination things?"

"Yes, they are pretty comfortable and practical too."

"I'm going to roll another smoke. Want one?"

"No, I think I've had enough for one night, Maddie said. Rose went back to the task.

"Is it getting warmer in here or is it me," Maddie asked and leaned out of the window for a breath of fresh air.

"I think it's you," Rose said while licking the paper that held her tobacco in place.

"I think we should turn down the light and get ready for bed. We have a big travel day tomorrow," suggested Maddie. Without a word, Rose stood and turned down the gas light mounted in the wall and sat back down in the chair. Even in the darkened room, she could feel Rose's eyes upon her as she stepped out of her dress and hung it on one of the coat hooks attached to the wall beside the bed. Maddie felt uncomfortable under her gaze and turned back the bed getting in as quickly as she could manage. She lay stiffly as close to one edge as possible. Maddie thought about what Rose had told her earlier about women being together and then dismissed the notion that Rose might be



interested in her that way. She hoped there was nothing to be concerned about other than the fact that Rose was still silently smoking in the chair across the room in the dark.

Maddie watched as Rose leaned over in the chair and took off her shoes and then unbuttoned her blouse. She stood and stepped out of her long skirt before walking to the side of the bed.

Maddie watched her let down her hair and give it a toss with the shake of her head. She was mesmerized by this beautiful portrait of Rose. Unexplainably curious, frightened and excited by her presence, Maddie felt her heartbeat quicken as Rose slid naked into the bed beside her, close enough to smell the smoke in her hair and the whiskey on her breath.

“Good night,” Rose said and rolled over on her side with her back to Maddie. Maddie felt the warmth of Rose next to her and sighed with relief. She listened to the night sounds on the street below to keep from thinking about the urge she felt inside her. Different than the sensations Enapay brought to her but an urge just the same. The difference was, she thought, that this was covered in darkness, secret and maybe shame. She refused to feel guilt over a curiosity that had been instigated by Rose’s words and probably past experience.

“Good night, Rose” she said, and waited for sleep.

Breakfast was uncomfortably quiet with an occasional mention of the weather, the train schedule and agreement about how good the food was. The waiter came by and Rose asked, “Could I please have a warmup on my coffee?”

Maddie was anxious to get to the train and away from the table so Rose's request was adding to the discomfort she was still feeling from the night before. She sensed that Rose was aware that she had gotten under her skin and that last night was not going to be forgotten and probably addressed at some point. The more she thought about it, the more she thought that Rose was toying with her.

Rose saw Maddie uncomfortably waiting, and set down her coffee saying, "I'm ready to get to the station, if you are."

Maddie quickly stood and headed to the cashier. Rose looked at her reflection once again in the window, admiring her new hat while Maddie continued on.

Rose hurried to catch her and asked, "Is something wrong?"

You've been very distant to me this morning."

"No. Nothing is wrong, Rose."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure." Maddie walked faster as if it would distance her from the questions Rose insisted on asking.

"All right. Fine then," Rose said. They walked the rest of the way to the train station in silence.

Rose looked confused on their arrival at the station. "What train are we taking to Chicago," she asked.

"We are on the Burlington from here to Chicago," Maddie said.

The miles rolled behind them and conversation came easier the closer they got to Chicago.

"When do you think we will get there?"

"Sometime tomorrow, early evening," Maddie said.

"Does this one have a dining car," Rose asked.

"No, but we stop to switch trains in Iowa. We can get dinner and a room then. We'll rest and then board the last train in the morning."

"Good. I'm ready for this to be over. Don't get me wrong, I think this is exciting because I've never been on a train or stayed in fancy hotels before. It's just that I would really like to take a bath and get out of these dirty clothes."

"Me too," Maddie said.

Rose said, "Maybe I could find one of those combinations, like you wear, at a ladies shop when we get to Iowa."

"I'm sure we can find something," Maddie said. The compartment was quiet with Rose looking out of the window and Maddie reading over her agreement with the Pinkerton's Agency.

Maddie put the agreement back into the carpetbag after a while had passed and said to Rose, "I need to apologize to you about the way I was behaving this morning."

"Forget it. No harm came of it."

"Seriously Rose, I was uncomfortable with our sleeping arrangement last night after what we talked about yesterday."

"What did we talk about," Rose asked.

"You know, about women ... you know, being .. well, uh ... together in a ... romantic way."

Rose burst out in laughter that made Maddie feel foolish and embarrassed. "And you thought that because I'd been drinking and crawled in to bed with you naked, something was going to happen."

"Well ... yes, the thought occurred to me," Maddie said.

Rose laughed again and looked out the window and asked, "So what made you so grouchy this morning, because I was bold or not bold enough?"

"I don't know. I had never heard of such a thing before and then the same night that I did, there is a beautiful naked woman in bed with me. What was I supposed to think?"

"So, you think I'm beautiful," Rose asked with a flirtatious tone in her voice and expression on her face.

Rose paid close attention as Maddie nervously fiddled with her hands and said, "Well yes, of course."

Rose looked out the window again and back to Maddie weighing how she wanted to say what she felt needed to be said. "I have done what we were talking about, but only twice. It happened after I was beaten really bad by a paying customer for not doing what he asked, the way he wanted me to." Maddie sat up, listening intently. Rose took a deep breath and continued, "I felt so bad and hurt so much. Someone came to me to comfort me and hold me together. I felt so worthless and abandoned. She rocked me and held me close." Tears filled Rose's eyes and she sniffled. Maddie got out a handkerchief and handed it to her. "She kissed my cheek and told me everything was going to be just fine. Then she kissed me on the cheek again and I was so grateful that someone was there for me that I turned and kissed her lips before she could pull away. It felt so soft and good that I didn't want to stop."

Rose stared out the window as Maddie searched for words of consolation but found nothing. She turned back to Maddie and said, "It may have been the wrong thing to do, but somehow it saved me."

Nothing more was said about it the rest of that day.

The train rolled into the station at Davenport and the pair of them went straightaway to the nearest Hotel and Bath they could find. Exhausted and hungry, Rose and Maddie wanted nothing more than to fill their bellies, take a hot bath and go to sleep. The bath was extra, but well worth the money to them both.

Back in their room which was much smaller than the one they shared the night before, Rose asked, "Do you want a smoke?"

"Yes, if you have enough to spare."

Rose sat on the edge of the bed and rolled one up for Maddie and she took the still moist tobacco and struck a match. Maddie inhaled the cigarette and watched as Rose rolled two more before striking a match to hers.

Rose said, "I feel so much better now."

"A hot bath does wonders for me," Maddie said.

Rose looked down at herself and said, "I just wish we got here earlier so I could have bought some under clothes to sleep in."

"We'll just do what we did last night. It's not like I haven't slept with you naked before," Maddie said jokingly.

Rose laughed saying, "I don't want you gettin' all uncomfortable again thinkin' something's gonna happen."

"No. I won't. Besides I understand perfectly why it happened with you back then."

Early the next morning they boarded the train that would finally deliver them to Chicago. The closer they got to what Maddie considered the greatest place in the country, the

more excited she became. She couldn't wait to see the city, it's streets and the people filling them.

"There is no place like it in the whole world," she said to Rose at a dinner stopover.

Having only a few minutes, they hurried back on board. The train began to fill with travelers headed to the city. Maddie watched them and tried to guess which ones were visitors and which ones lived there. She made her decisions based on how they dressed and by their manners. She wanted to see if she was right when they reached Chicago. Some will move off, knowing where they are going, some will look confused and others will be met and greeted by family or friends. That will be the tell all.

Slowly the train rolled into the Great Central Station and Rose got her first look at Michigan avenue. After collecting their trunks, they moved to the corner of Michigan and Waters to catch the horse drawn streetcar to State street.

"I can hardly breathe. This is the most amazing city I could ever imagine," Rose said as she looked all around on her first ever ride in a streetcar.

Maddie watched her friend's wide-eyed expression as she drank in the unbelievable experience, she was now completely immersed in. "I told you it was incredible," Maddie proudly said.

"It is almost like it can't really be," Rose said while marveling at the architecture she hadn't imagined ever existed anywhere before this moment.

"We will be in my, I should say, our neighborhood very soon," Maddie said. She is wondering how Rose will react



when she sees the brownstone mansion Maddie has known as home for all of her life.

The streetcar comes to a stop. "Come on, Rose. We get off here and get over to the carriage stand across the street." They dragged their heavy trunks to the street.

"Wait here. I'll hire a carriage.

Rose sat down on her trunk and watched as Maddie crossed the street. The carriage crossed the street and the driver climbed down and lifted the trunks on board as the two women sat side by side. Rose squeezed Maddie's hand as the horse started down the brick street. After a short ride it turned on to North State Parkway.

Rose's mouth dropped open and she muttered, "Look at these places. Do people really live in there?"

The carriage came to a stop in front of a beautiful mansion just as the sun was setting and reflected in the huge windows on the main floor. "We do." Maddie opened her purse and paid the driver who kindly carried the two trunks to the front door where Mrs. Hutchins waited to welcome Maddie home.

"Mrs. Hutchins, it is so nice to see you here," Maddie said as she threw her arms around her. Mrs. Hutchins seemed somewhat surprised by Maddie's display of affection. She noticed right away that Maddie not only looked very grown up, she also seemed to shed her reserved former personality.

Mrs. Hutchins said, "It seems the Western Territories treated you very well, despite the tragedy you faced upon your arrival. A day doesn't pass that I don't think of that sad day."

“Yes, it was difficult in the beginning, but a new and different way of life with new friends helped the healing tremendously,” Maddie said.

Rose cleared her throat and said, “Hello, Mrs. Hutchins, I am Rose.”

“I am so sorry, yes, this is my very good friend Rose. She will be living with me,” Maddie said very apologetically.

Mrs. Hutchins replied, “I am pleased to meet you, Miss Rose.”

“I’m going to show Rose around the house and have her pick out a room for self. Is there any food in the house?”

“Yes, there was a market delivery just this afternoon and I can have dinner for you in about forty-five minutes. I hope that will be suitable,” Mrs. Hutchins said.

“Of course, it is. That would be wonderful,” said Maddie.

Rose was looking up at the ornate plaster crown moldings and oval feature surrounding the great chandelier in the grand foyer when Maddie said, “Let me show you the house.”

Maddie opened double doors into the enormous formal sitting room where her parents entertained guests throughout Maddie’s childhood. “We only seemed to use this room when we had guests. It was really too big to get comfortable in.”

Rose was speechless and followed Maddie from room to room. She was beginning to see her friend in a different light. She was realizing what great wealth she was accustomed to, yet made even a lowly whore feel every bit an equal. Maddie led her through a side door to a greenhouse filled with exotic plants of various size and color.

“This was Mother’s passion. She spent hours on end toiling over her plants and making room for new additions,” Maddie said with a touch of sadness spreading across her face that she didn’t expect. It was the first reminder she had seen of her mother’s presence. She shook it off and started to leave.

“Who takes care of them now,” Rose asked.

“Peter. He’s the gardener. You’ll see him around a lot. He takes care of the furnace, the hot water, gardening and whatever else needs attention.”

“Does Mrs. Hutchins live here like Jeanita did at the other house?”

“No. She has a husband and two grown children. She is only here a few days a week. Mostly general cleaning and dusting and to let in deliveries. You know, ice, milk, bread and grocery orders.”

“So, you don’t really have to do much for yourself,” Rose said.

Maddie just smiled and wheeled away through the kitchen. Rose was right behind her and slid through the swinging door before it closed behind Maddie.

Rose stopped in her tracks and looked around at the enormous tiled kitchen. “This is bigger than the whole downstairs of the house I lived in last week.” She slowly walked around the chopping block and prep table in the center, admiring the shiny pots and pans that hung above it.

Maddie patiently waited as Rose took in every little thing with great interest. Maddie said, “Let’s go find you a room.” Maddie started off down the hallway to a beautiful oak staircase that featured intricately carved oak leaves and acorns.

They reached the second floor and started down a hallway that was wider than any room Rose had been in until today.

"This floor was my parents' floor. Their suites and baths are all there is.

"Baths, they each had their own bath?"

"Yes, would you like to see," Maddie asked. Maddie opened a heavy door and stepped through. She looked around and announced, "This is my Mother's Suite. The door over there adjoins to my Father's."

Rose was astounded by the beautiful furnishings and draperies over the tall narrow windows. She ran her hand along the back of a velvet settee and wondered how anyone could ever move away from such a luxurious home.

"And this is Mother's bath." They stepped inside an enormous room with dressing tables, floor length mirrors, running water, a chain pull commode and a huge claw foot enameled bathtub. Rose stood with her mouth gaping wide open and Maddie laughed. "I know. Mother was a little extravagant about this room."

Rose asked, "All this for just one woman?"

Maddie walked out without answering. Rose hurried after her. They walked to the end of the hallway where a second gorgeous staircase took them to the third floor.

"There are four bedrooms and two bathrooms on this floor. This one was mine growing up." She opened the door for Rose to peek inside but did not enter. "You might like this one next to the playroom. It has its own bath." She opened the door to a very large, elegantly appointed room with a skylight overhead.

"You mean, if I want, this can be my room," Rose asked in disbelief.

“Yes. why not?”

“Rose shook her head and said, “You’ll get no argument from me.”

Maddie giggled and said, “The hard part will be getting your trunk up two flights of stairs.”

“Believe me, I will get it up here one way or another,” Rose said with a chuckle.

“Here let me show you your bathroom.” Maddie walked across the room and through the open door, stopping to light the gas light. “Come in and look around,” she said.

Rose stepped inside smiling and wondering how she would ever accept the notion that this room was hers and that she truly lived in this beautiful mansion whether she deserved to or not.

“I don’t know what to say, Maddie. All of this is beyond my wildest imagination. Everything is so perfect. I’m afraid to touch anything for fear I might break something,” Rose said with great appreciation. She was feeling quite small and for once knew what it was like to feel intimidation by another’s status, something Maddie would never want Rose to feel.

“Let’s go down and check on dinner. Then maybe we can figure out how to get our trunks back up the stairs,” Maddie said.

Rose dismissed her feeling about not being good enough to be living in her rich friend’s house. Maddie had a disarming charm about her that always made Rose feel at ease.

They made their way to the dining room and sat together at one end of the table that served twelve. Mrs. Hutchins

had already set their places when she entered with a pitcher of water and poured into the goblets.

When she left again, Rose leaned into Maddie and said, "This is so fancy."

Mrs. Hutchins returned with a cart and set its holdings onto the table. "If you don't need anything else, with your permission of course, I would like to go home for the evening," Mrs. Hutchins said.

"Yes, by all means and thank you for making our dinner, it looks delicious," said Maddie.

Mrs. Hutchins said, "Thank you, Miss Border. It was a pleasure to meet you, Miss Rose. Good night." With that, she slipped her sweater on in the hallway and stepped out into the night.

Maddie ladled potatoes onto her plate and asked, "Would you go uptown with me tomorrow morning?"

"Yes, I can't wait."

"Good. I want to go to the Pinkerton's office and let them know I am here so I can find out what to do next," Maddie said while cutting into a piece of roast beef.

"Maybe we can do some shopping?"

Maddie said, "Yes. I definitely need to find suitable clothing for my new job. The girl's I've met always dressed very nice. I'll know more, I imagine, after I look around at the agency."

"That would be great. I need a lot of things. I want to get some of those new-fangled underthings. What did you call them?"

Maddie said, "Combination. It's called a combination."

"That's right. Now I remember. Combination," Rose said as if she was trying to memorize the name of it.



## Chapter Fourteen

### Madison Border, Detective

After parting ways on North Michigan street, where Rose could do some shopping, Maddie took a deep breath when she reached 80 Washington Street, the national headquarters for Pinkerton's National Detective Agency.

Once inside she was instructed to sit while her superiors were notified of her arrival. On the wall was a large painting that bore the company motto, "We Never Sleep". Beside it was a listing of the principle officers representing New York, Philadelphia and Chicago. Maddie was intrigued but also a little intimidated by the bearded portrait of Allan Pinkerton that seemed to be looking down upon her. She was absorbed in another mounted photograph of Pinkerton himself on horseback at the Antietam Battlefield in 1862. She knew Pinkerton's provided security to the President and even pursued criminal and political assignments internationally, leaving her to wonder how an agency of this magnitude could ever benefit by recruiting her to service.

Maddie heard heavy shoes echoing in the lobby and looked up to find a very short man with a round belly walking toward her. His cheeks were red as was the end of his nose. As he approached her, he seemed to be distracted by what appeared to be the contract she had agreed to and signed in Bear Gulch. She couldn't help but notice how carefully he combed the thin strands of hair across the top of an otherwise bald head.

"Madison Border, I presume," he said without looking up.

"Yes, I am"

"Very good. I am Mr. LeBate. I am charged with evaluating your skills and general knowledge. After which, I will make recommendations concerning specialized training. Come with me," he said as he turned and walked out of the lobby and into a long hallway.

Mr. LeBate opened the door to a very small empty room with a table and one chair. He set down a stack of freshly printed paper and said, "I will return in one hour to gather them and then we will continue with the next step."

Maddie sat in the chair and began to fill out the multiple-choice questions on each page. They were very basic in nature and Maddie felt that she had answered the questions honestly after completing them all in twenty-two minutes. Nothing left to do but wait for his return. The next thirty-eight minutes seemed a life time, then Mr. LeBate returned.

She felt uncomfortable as he poured over her answers and occasionally stopped long enough to look at her briefly. She wondered if she had answered them incorrectly or maybe it was personal. Maybe he didn't care for women recruits. The more she thought about it the more nervous she became.

He shoved the papers into a folder and said, "Excellent. Come with me Miss Border."

Maddie was relieved to hear that one word and hurriedly followed him down the hall again. They stopped at a door with a frosted glass pane. He knocked quickly upon it and turned the doorknob before waiting for a response. At a desk on the opposite side of the office sat a thin woman in her late forties, who offered an immediate smile as she stood with her hand out to Maddie.

"Miss Turnock, this is Madison Border she is a highly recommended recruit of Jeffery Winters and Elise Mitchell. You may want to review her folder and make a recommendation as to what you want to do with her," Mr. LeBate said.

"Very well, please have a seat Miss Border while I get a little more organized," Miss Turnock said as she sat down at her desk. She pushed a gray tendril of hair back in place away from her forehead where it blended into her salt and pepper tightly worn bun.

Maddie sat patiently as Miss Turnock scanned over the intake questions. She laid them down on her desk and began reading Jeffery Winter's recommendations and letter of reference to the agency. She set down the letters and said, "Jeffery Winters seems to think you are ready for field assignments based on investigative reasoning you apparently displayed during the course of the Union Pacific robberies. He also says that your marksmanship is exceptional, reflexes and decisive decision-making abilities are remarkable. The only thing he does not reference is hand to hand protective and submission knowledge. Are you trained in or have experience in those areas?"

Maddie immediately pictured herself being hit and knocked to the ground by the horsemen by the tracks, remembering how they tried to take her in the snow against her will. She remembered shooting the attacker but not being able to fight him off without her gun.

“If you are asking can I defend myself unarmed with confidence, the answer is no,” Maddie said.

“That’s fine. We can get you trained to handle most situations that could arise. I will schedule training to begin tomorrow morning with Catherine Mosely. She is our expert in self-defense and has trained almost all of our female agents for the past fifteen years. When she says you are ready, you will receive official status and field assignments,” Miss Turnock said and stood extending her hand to Maddie. “I am sure you are going to make a great addition to the Pinkerton’s Agency and look forward to seeing you again. You are dismissed for today and will report to Catherine at seven tomorrow morning.”

“Thank you, Miss Turnock,” Maddie said.

Maddie hurried to North Michigan street where she hoped to find Rose. She looked in the windows of the shops she thought Rose may have found interesting and went in to all of them, but did not see her in any of them. What if she got lost and doesn’t remember the address at the house? She was sure she wouldn’t wander too far because they had agreed to meet on Michigan. She stepped out onto the busy street that was filled with lunchtime sidewalk traffic. She looked across the street and saw a drugstore with a sign that featured a lunch counter. She entered the drugstore to find Rose, surrounded by smiling men in suits crowding close to

where she was perched on a stool at the counter with shopping bags piled around her feet. Maddie pushed her way through the attention seeking admirers and marveled at Rose's ability to draw a pursuing crowd without even trying.

"Maddie, I thought I'd never find you again," she said.

"It took longer than I expected. I see you've done some shopping."

"Yes, I found some great things. Sit with me. You must be hungry," Rose insisted. She waved away her admirers to clear a path to the seat next to her. Maddie sat next to her and looked over the menu card attached to a condiment caddy.

Rose excitedly said, "I made sure I bought classy looking outfits. I don't want to come off as trashy. The store clerks were very helpful and I can't wait to show you what I bought."

"I'm excited for you Rose," Maddie said.

"How did it go at Pinkerton's?"

Maddie said, "I have to go in the morning for self-defense classes. When that is over, I'll get my badge and be a full-fledged detective."

"I want to get a job. A real one," Rose announced.

"You can do that," Maddie said.

"Not just any old job. I want to do something important," Rose added. She gave it a moment's thought and continued, "Maybe even at Field and Leiter."

"You were there today?"

"Yes. On State street and Washington," Rose proudly announced.

"That's a nice place to shop."

“Sure is. They even have elevators to take you all the way up to the fifth floor,” Rose said and then added, “I rode on it. I’m not sure how it works, but it does.”

“It’s steam powered, like the train engines, I only know that because my father told me about them and how they work the first time I rode one with him,” Maddie said.

They got on a street car and Rose exclaimed, “Chicago is the greatest. I love it here.”

The man in the seat ahead of them turned around saying, “Chicago is the enterprise capital of the world.” Rose and Maddie looked forward to the man to find a grinning, Roswell Fykes.

“What a lovely surprise to find you two lovely ladies on this glorious day,” he said.

Maddie ignored his comments but Rose couldn’t and encouraged him by asking, “Isn’t your name Roswell Fykes?”

“A good memory you have. Yes, I am Roswell Fykes. I never did catch your name,” he said.

Rose coolly said, “I never offered you my name.”

“Well, let me ask again. What is your name?”

“Rose.”

“Rose? Just Rose? Surely you have a last name.” Roswell inquired with great curiosity.

“Just Rose,” she said.

“It’s a shame I am just leaving the city already, I would like to become more acquainted with you. That is, if it is alright with your, um-uh, friend,” he deliberately stammered in reference to their holding hands in the hotel restaurant. “Alas, business calls me to the south, Savannah



actually. I have an interest in sugar there.” He leaned forward and said, “A big interest in deed.”

Rose offered no response to his boast and her indifference caused him to turn around and face the front. Maddie looked over at Rose and rolled her eyes.

He suddenly stood up as the streetcar came to the next stop. “Good day, Ladies,” he said and quickly departed.

Rose said to Maddie, “Do you think he is as rich as he says he is?”

“I think he would say anything to get close to you,” Maddie answered.

The next few weeks seemed to fly by for Maddie and Rose. While Maddie was in training, Rose discovered Lake Michigan, the best restaurants in the city, and some of the most charming and wealthy bachelors that seemed to be everywhere, any time of day or night. She loved dropping the good Border name from time to time and loved the effect it had on folks when she mentioned that home was North State Parkway. She started to feel as if she were someone important and dressed for the part. On the inside she was still just Rose, a woman with a past, pretending to be someone she didn’t feel she deserves to be ... yet.

As Maddie’s skills developed and improved, she came home at night with more and more confidence and fewer and fewer bruises from lessons learned with Catherine Mosely. She was at least a dozen years older than Maddie but they struck up a friendship right away. It didn’t mean that Catherine would go lightly on Maddie because of it. Not at all. She was very tough on Maddie in training. She wanted her to be the best she could be and prepared to

defend herself in any type of attack that might occur in service. Catherine knew first hand from many years with Pinkerton's how dangerous the assignments could be. She mentored Maddie with great insight, experience and a genuine affection that Maddie never quite understood, but accepted it and even had lunch together a few times. She liked spending time with Catherine. She was too young to be a mother figure and too old for a sisterly relationship. Maddie was growing up and found she had a woman to woman friend.

Mrs. Hutchins let herself in the front door at seven thirty and took off her sweater to hang by the entry. Maddie met her at the bottom of the stairway. "Good morning, Miss Maddie," she said.

"Good morning."

"Are you off to learn more self-defense techniques?"

"No, I'm actually going to be issued my badge and first assignment this morning," Maddie said.

Mrs. Hutchins detected the pride in Maddie's voice and said, "Your mother would be so proud."

Maddie checked her hat in the foyer mirror. Satisfied that she looked appropriate for the day, she stepped out into the cool October morning. She missed wearing trousers and a holster slung around her hips, but she didn't mind the shoulder holster concealed beneath her jacket. It took a little getting used to the thigh holsters for her one-shot derringer and knife. No one could feel any safer or more lethal than Maddie does this morning on the way to Pinkerton's headquarters. She will meet the team of detectives she has

been assigned to work with and will be briefed in great detail about her very first case.

Mickey LeBate met her in the lobby and led her to the briefing room. Two male detectives rose immediately upon her entrance.

Smiling at her across the huge cherry wood conference table was Polly Jameson. Maddie barely caught the men's names as they were introduced because of her excitement to see and work with Polly again.

David Widmer, a young man new to the agency offered his hand and said, "Good morning, Miss Border. We've heard good things about you."

The older gentleman, Michael Grant, would be the lead investigator. He nodded his head and said, "This is an unusual case of possible abduction. Our mission is to infiltrate an orphanage across the Indiana line. We suspect that the administrators are selling the older orphans into slave labor. Records of children that had been previously deemed unsuitable for adoption are mysteriously disappearing without being placed in family environments. This activity is suspect and at first caught the attention of a woman, Miss Adeline Robinson, who questioned the unusual disappearance. She was promptly fired after having been on staff for over sixteen years. There may be some profitable association with the local police department as her complaints were largely ignored. She was told to go home and put it out of her head."

Polly asked, "How did this become a Pinkerton concern?" "Miss Robinson contacted us and hired our service. She is a woman of modest means and is paying us out of her own

pocket, so it is imperative that we settle this case as quickly as possible," Mr. Grant answered.

David asked, "How much time are we allotting to discovery and conclusion?"

Mr. Grant said, "She can only pay for two days, but Mr. LeBate is allowing for one day, gratis."

Maddie sat attentively trying not to show her excitement but the intrigue of the situation was getting the best of her.

"Our plan is to have David and Polly pose as a married couple looking to adopt an older child, maybe two, to help on their farm. We have answered an advertisement in the Michigan City Herald for a cook. Which is where you come in, Madison. We sent a letter in forward to speak with the orphanage administrator about employment. They are expecting Peggy Martin. You are to assume that persona."

"When do I leave for the orphanage," Maddie asked. Michael Grant pushed back a strand of grey hair and said, "You will be on the five o'clock Michigan Central train to Michigan City, Indiana. You will arrive at approximately seven thirty and take your room at the Washington Hotel. You will then take a coach to your eight-a.m. appointment at the Meadow View Children's Home where you will be interviewed by Harriet Miller. We suspect that she is the perpetrator of the acts in question. Do you understand?"

"Yes," Maddie said.

"Good," he said while handing Maddie an envelope then added, "Inside is your expense allowance and train ticket. You will pay for your meals and hotel from the allowance. I am sure it is more than generous."

Maddie sat silent waiting for more from Mr. Grant. After a moment he said, "You may go home now and pack a few

things for the next three days. Nothing fancy. Remember, you are applying for a position as a cook."

Maddie stood and said, "Thank you Mr. Grant for trusting me with this assignment."

"Go. Time is slipping away," he said gruffly.

Polly smiled at Maddie and said, "See you day after tomorrow."

Maddie tossed clothes all over her bedroom looking for just the right things to take. She knew what to take for two of the days but was stumped for the third.

Rose entered her room and looked over the mess on the floor and covering her bed and asked, "What in the world happened here?"

Maddie excitedly wheeled around to face her and blurted, "I have a case!"

"Really?"

"Yes. It's so exciting but I need something simple to wear for one of the days and other than my old trousers and shirts, I've got nothing."

"Maybe I have something. Let's go look," Rose said and headed off toward her room upstairs. Maddie followed her up the third-floor stairs. After looking through Rose's clothes they settled on a simple floral print cotton dress that would be suitable for working in. "You'd better try it on. Make sure it fits," Rose suggested.

Maddie hurriedly stripped out of her dress and pulled Rose's over her head. She spun around and asked, "What do you think?"

"Perfect. You look like a real working girl," Rose said.

Maddie squealed, "Thank you Rose. You are a real-life saver." She threw her arms around Rose and hugged her tight.

Rose turned her head and kissed Maddie on the lips. Maddie pulled away sharply. "I'm sorry. I got caught up.," Rose said apologetically.

"It's ok," Maddie said and stepped into a kiss of her own. Rose did not pull away. It was only a few seconds, but stayed with her all that day, onto the train and into the night where it played out over and over again in her room at the Washington Hotel.

"That's just silly," Maddie said as she rolled over in her bed and closed her eyes in hopes of falling asleep.

Maddie left the carriage at the bottom of the hill where an overgrown monstrosity of a building loomed over her at the top. She began to climb crumbling brick steps to the top of the embankment where small faces appeared in windows of the old mansion that had seen its best days long ago. She reached the top and walked across a wide porch to a door that lost its stain years before. The door opened slowly and a dark haired gaunt looking woman stood before her. Her hair was parted in the center and pulled back into a bun. Maddie assumed her to be Harriet Miller, the administrator of the orphanage.

"I am Peggy Martin and I am here to see Miss Miller."

"I am Mrs. Miller. Come with me," the woman said. Maddie followed her through a dark musty smelling foyer and past an equally dark dining room that didn't look to Maddie as if it had seen any diners in quite a while.



They continued to the kitchen where two women who were talking cheerfully, suddenly stopped and returned to their duties. One vigorously scrubbed a large pot while the other peeled potatoes. Maddie sensed that Mrs. Miller was as disciplined with the help as with the children who lived there.

Pointing at an enormous amount of dirty plates, bowls and old silverware Mrs. Miller said, "This is your station. Wash and dry them. Maude will tell you where to put them when you have finished. Sweep and mop the floor afterward."

Maddie said, "There must be a mistake. I applied to the position of cook."

"I don't need a cook. Maude is my cook. If she needs your help, she will ask for it. Are we understood?"

"Yes, Mrs. Miller," Maddie said.

Mrs. Miller, turned and left the room. Maddie found an apron hanging nearby and tied it behind her waist. Maude the cook was heavy and smelled as though she didn't bathe very often.

She smiled at Maddie and said with an English accent, "Don't worry about her, she don't come back here all that often and that suits us just fine." She walked with a heavy step and swollen ankles over to Maddie and continued, "You'll be stackin' em up over here on this table when you're finished, love. What's your name girl?"

"Ma ... Peggy, Peggy Martin. Pleased to meet you Miss Maude."

"Just Maude. Tis plenty good enough. This girl over here is Jenny. She's kinda quiet til you get to know her. Pretty

easy work so long as you stay clear of Mrs. Miller,” Maude said.

Maddie spent the rest of the morning washing dirty cups, plates and silver wondering all the while why she never hears the sounds of children anywhere. Maddie thinks she is probably not in a good position to learn much, buried under a pile of dirty pots and pans. She decides to prod Maude into conversation, hoping she knows just enough to give her something to go on. She needs some insider knowledge or even rumor could be beneficial for starters. She looks up from the cold grey water she’s been scrubbing in and through a film covered window that, judging from the detailed trim and sash, had once been a handsome feature in the old kitchen area. Behind the cookstove the wall was blackened with soot. In front of it stood Maude, cutting potatoes into a boiling pot, unaware that her bread loaves had over raised with too much yeast in a very warm kitchen.

“Maude, the bread is going to fall,” Maddie said.

She turned and shook her head, stomping over to the cutting table in the center of the room. “Goddammit, Jenny.”

Jenny looked away, knowing it was something she had done. It usually was and Jenny was used to getting blamed almost daily for something or other.

Maude put both hands on her wide hips, cocked her head to one side and asked, “How many times do I have to tell you to take it easy on the goddamned yeast?”

“I’m sorry, Maude. I wasn’t thinking,” Jenny said.

Maddie noted that Jenny seemed much too passive and probably had suffered abuse for a very long time. She felt

bad for this poor woman who looked as if she had never known a single day of happiness in her entire life. It must be absolute torture being mistreated and disrespected continually, Maddie thought.

Maddie hoisted a pan from the tub of water and said in a very clear and loud voice, "I don't see or hear any children. Where are they?"

Jenny looked nervously to Maude and then down at the floor. Maude forced a smile and laid a cleaver down on the cutting block. "They are out doing chores. The ones that's big enough to anyway. The smaller ones are upstairs."

"I see. Do most of them find permanent homes with families?" Maddie asked while making certain to see Jenny's reaction to the question. Jenny wheeled around turning her back to Maddie. She decided her best bet would be to find an opportunity to speak to Jenny alone.

"Yeah, some of them make it outta here, but then again some, like Jenny here, never do," Maude said. With an antagonistic tone in her voice, she added, "If I was you, I'd keep my thoughts to myself 'bout how things are done around here. Could cost you your job."

Maddie wanted to ask why, but decided to play it innocent and let it go, for now. Maddie was certain that Jenny knew a lot more than she would openly tell. She knew she would have to gain her confidence and wait for the perfect opportunity. Maddie could see a long house behind the old mansion with small windows and little else. Just a plain looking one-story clapboard painted white long ago. Through the window, she saw two boys look over their shoulders and slip around the side of the building. They looked to be thirteen or fourteen years old. Shielded by the

building, Maddie didn't see them again until they were far in the distance running across a field to a line of trees. She kept the sighting to herself.

It wasn't long and Mrs. Miller appeared walking swiftly toward the long house. Maddie watched her enter and reappear in just a few seconds. She stormed angrily toward the kitchen doors.

Mrs. Miller came in red faced and obviously furious saying, "Maude, come to my office with me, please."

"Yes, Ma'am," Maude said as she followed her out of the kitchen.

Maddie took the opportunity to ask, "Jenny, what is going on?"

"I didn't see nothin' Ma'am."

"I'm not Ma'am, Jenny. My name is Peggy. Are strange things happening here?"

"I don't want to say."

"So, bad things happen here at the orphanage and you don't want to get in trouble for telling about it. I understand," Maddie said, looking toward the door, knowing her time is limited. "You can tell me. I won't say anything to Mrs. Miller." Jenny cringed at the mention of her name.

"It's Mrs. Miller isn't it? She's the one doing the bad things. You don't have to say. Just nod your head, yes or no."

Jenny looks toward the door and then nods, 'Yes' to Maddie. Jenny's expression says it all. It was as close to a plea for help as any she had ever seen.

"So, how old are you," Maddie asked.

"Nineteen, I think," Jenny said.

"How long have you been working here," Maddie asked.  
"I've been with Maude in the kitchen for ten years."

Maddie came to the realization that Jenny was one of the orphans. "You know you don't have to stay here anymore. You are a grown woman."

"Can't leave," Jenny said on the verge of tears.

"Why?"

"They got my baby."

Astonished, Maddie asked, "You have a baby?"

"Yes. If I leave, they will give my baby away."

"It's your baby, you just take it with you," Maddie said in a whisper.

"No. You don't know," Jenny whispered back.

The door swung open and Jenny immediately turned back to her work. Maude entered and continued cutting the meat that was still laying on the block.

Obviously lost in her own thoughts, Maude said nothing more for the rest of the day until she told Maddie that she was free to go and to be back at 6:30 in the morning.

Maddie went out of the kitchen door and around to the front of the old place where she could use the steps to reach the bottom of the hill. She looked back up and saw two small children, one boy and one girl around four or five years old looking out of the same window she saw children in, early this morning. She shuddered at the thought of what all was going on in that horrifying place. Maddie couldn't wait to get back to the hotel, in hopes the Pinkerton team had arrived during the day.

She turned around when she heard a voice call her name.

"Peggy, wait Peggy. You forgot your scarf." It was Jenny running up behind her.

“Thank you so much. I hadn’t noticed ...,”

Jenny quickly cut her off saying, “I have to lay with the sheriff. If I don’t, they will give my baby away.” as quickly as she arrived, she turned and started back to the old mansion.

Maddie didn’t ask anymore, for fear they might be under the watchful eye of Mrs. Miller.

Maddie grew impatient waiting in the lobby of the Washington Hotel. When are they coming, she wondered? Maddie heard the sound of heels on the tiled lobby floor and looked up to see Polly Jameson strolling to the desk. “Polly,” Maddie said as she quickly stood and started toward her.

Polly saw Maddie and smiled. “Hello Maddie. I’ll bet you thought we got lost.”

“I was beginning to wonder,” said Maddie.

“We had a last-minute briefing on another case that held us up just long enough to miss our train,” Polly explained.

David and Michael came into the lobby, each with a small bag. “Hello, Maddie,” David said.

“Hello, David”

He asked, “I know it has only been a day, but has anything come to the surface?”

Maddie said, “I did witness and learn a few unsettling things, but nothing yet about the disappearances of the older boys.”

Polly picked up her room key and stepped up to David and Maddie saying, “I’m sure Michael will want to hear everything at dinner.”



Michael joined them after checking in and asked, "Did I hear my name?"

Polly said, "Yes, you did. Maddie has some intelligence to report that might be useful."

Back in her room after dinner she wondered if what she told the team was of any value, judging from Michael's lack of reaction. She wished she had something concrete to tell them and was determined to learn more from Jenny if and when the opportunity came up. A knock on her door brought Polly and David into her room.

"We've decided to switch things up a bit. We are going to ask about a small girl to adopt," David announced.

"I thought you were going to see about an older boy," Maddie said, confused by the change of plan.

Polly explained, "We want to seem as though we are the typical childless couple. Our reasoning, and this is something Michael brought up, is that if Michael shows up shortly after us with a straightforward request involving cash and no paperwork, this Mrs. Miller might get greedy, say too much and accidentally show her hand, trying to accommodate all of us at once.

"So, what role do I play in this," Maddie asked.

Polly said, "Obviously, this Jenny girl knows a lot and is willing to tell you provided no one overhears her. We are going to try to occupy Mrs. Miller giving you time to press her further."

"But there is the cook, Maude. She knows more than she is letting on and is very protective of her job. I don't know that she will ever be away from us long enough to learn anything more," said Maddie.

"That could be a problem. Unless we orchestrate a need for her to leave the kitchen," David said stroking his chin.

Polly turned toward the door and said, "Sleep on it, Maddie. I'm sure we will come up with something."

Maddie walked them to the door and locked it behind them. She went over to the bed and sat on the edge. "I wish Rose was here. She'd know how to open this can of trouble."

She moved over to the window to open it a crack before rolling a cigarette. She thinks it will take a miracle to solve this case in just three days when she sees the same two boys she watched run away from the longhouse this morning. Even though it was nearly dark, she recognized them by their bowl haircuts and blue wool coats. She burst from her room and out the front door of the hotel.

She caught sight of them almost a block down the street. Maddie walked as swiftly as her legs would carry her after them. They stopped at the next corner looking hungry, tired and afraid.

When Maddie caught up to them, she asked, "Do you boys know where a place to eat might be?"

One of the boys looked down at the ground and said, "No, Ma'am."

"I'm so hungry right now. I haven't eaten since this morning," she said.

The younger looking boy lifted his baby face to her and said, "We haven't eaten since this morning either."

Maddie smiled and said, "Why don't we go and find someplace to eat?"

The taller boy answered her sadly saying, "We don't have any money."

"Let me see how much I have," Maddie said smiling as she looked through her purse. Hopeful yet cautious, the boys wait and watch as Maddie silently counts out her cash.

"We've got plenty. The only place I know for sure is the hotel. Let's go," she cheerfully said and began walking back. The smaller boy matched her stride, staying right beside her while the other lagged behind. When they reached the hotel, Maddie started to enter but the taller boy stopped.

"Come on, let's eat before they stop serving dinner," Maddie said to urge him on.

With a suspicious look upon his face he asked, "Why are you doing this for us?"

"Aren't you hungry? I know I am, your friend here is. Come on, it's fine," she pleaded.

The younger boy said, "Pete, please come in. I'm so hungry. It's been all day."

Pete reluctantly followed as Maddie led them to the dining room. They took seats at a table where Pete looked very uncomfortable and scanned the room for signs of trouble. Maddie took notice but made no mention of it.

Maddie assured them that everyone in the room was a stranger, a traveler and that nobody knew anyone in the room. She looked into the eyes of the younger boy and said, "My name is Maddie, what's yours?"

"Harry," he said.

"That's a good strong name."

He smiled. Pete was still occupied with searching the other diner's faces.

"Are you looking for someone," she asked.

"No. It's just, uh, no."

"You can have anything you like," she told the boys when the waiter arrived.

"Can I have pork chops and milk," asked Harry. The waiter asked if Harry would like mashed potatoes and green beans as well. Harry beamed and nodded his head, "Yes," with great enthusiasm.

She waited for the boys to be well into their dinner when she asked, "Tell me the truth, what are you boys running from?"

Harry answered with his mouth full of a dinner roll, "The orphan's home."

Pete cut him off. "They sold us to some southern man. He was coming tomorrow to get us."

"You mean someone adopted you into their family. You should be happy about that," Maddie said, knowing where this might go.

"It's not like that," Pete said.

"Well, what is it then?"

"Hurry up, Harry. We have to get going," Pete said.

"Where we going?"

"Just hurry up."

"Stop. I can help you," Maddie said.

"You don't understand, you couldn't," Pete said, pushing away from the table.

"Wait," Maddie said laying her hand on Pete's arm. There was nothing but a frightened silence in Pete's eyes while Harry continued to hungrily eat as fast as he could.

Maddie looked at Harry and told Pete to let him finish his dinner before rushing off. Pete didn't argue, knowing that Harry was hungry and couldn't provide for him later. Maddie knew she had just bought a few minutes time and

didn't want to waste them. "Look, I'm not supposed to do this, but I'm going to be honest with you. Something bad is happening to boys at the orphanage. I know it, you know it and it's my job to get to the bottom of it."

"How do you know so much about it," Pete asked.

Maddie asked, "Do you remember a Miss Robinson that worked at the orphanage?"

Harry spoke up, "Yes, she was really nice to us."

"Well, I work for a company that solves mysteries. She contacted us saying that boys were leaving the orphanage but no record of the boys having ever been there could be found after they disappeared. She was very worried about you children and asked Mrs. Miller about it."

"Mrs. Miller fired her," Pete said.

"That's right, but why?"

"Look, it's a racket. The sheriff brings this guy, he pays money for boys, the sheriff takes half to look the other way and Mrs. Miller keeps the rest."

"How do you know all this?"

"Jenny. Jenny told all of us to watch out and get away if we could. Mrs. Miller won't even let her have her own baby, so she keeps her mouth shut about it."

"I see," Maddie said.

"Are you about done, Harry," Pete asked.

"Almost. Just two more bites and I gotta finish my milk," replied Harry.

"What's your plan, Pete?"

"What do you mean," he asked.

"I mean, do you have a place for you and Harry to spend the night? I'm sure you have to be tired. It's going to get really cold tonight. How are you going to stay warm?"

With a look of concern Harry asked, "Pete where are we going to sleep tonight?"

"I'll think of something, come on."

Pete stands and Harry slowly gets up from the table, reaching for another dinner roll for his pocket.

Maddie takes out money for the bill and lays it on the table.

"I have an idea, boys. I will get you a room. A nice warm room for the night if you help me with something tomorrow.

Harry says, "Yes, anything you say."

Pete's suspicions were raised, but was curious all the same because a nice clean warm bed in a safe place sounded really good.

He said, "First I want to know what you want us to do."

"I want you to go back to the orphanage tomorrow morning and tell Mrs. Miller that you spent the night out in the cold and got really hungry and you realize now that you can't make it out there in the world all by yourself so you came back."

"Pete shook his head and said, "I don't want to go back there. They'll take us away."

"That's exactly why I want you to do it. When the man comes to take you boys, my men will detain him and Mrs. Miller when we catch them red handed,"

"What about the sheriff?"

"If he is involved with the transaction, we will hand him over to the U.S. Marshal's office."

"Who are you," Pete asked?

Maddie took out her badge and said, "I am a Pinkerton's Agent."



Harry smiled and asked, "Really?"

"Yes, really. Are you going to help me solve this case," Maddie asked?

"What's in it for us," Pete asked.

"You will make it safe for Harry, you and all the other children of the orphanage. Caring people will replace Mrs. Miller and her staff. You will bring about a change in the living conditions for everyone. You will save them all and be a hero," Maddie said with a firm and confident voice. Pete shuffled his feet and nervously looked around the room. Harry watched Pete closely waiting for his answer.

"What do you say, Pete? There's a nice warm room just up the stairs if you want it" Maddie said.

Harry pleaded, "Come on, Pete. I'm tired."

Pete quietly said, "All right. We'll do it."

Maddie stood up and led the boys to the lobby. She pointed at two upholstered wingback chairs and said, "Wait here While I get you the room."

Maddie turned the key in the door and led the boys inside. "See, this is a nice room for you. I'll be back in the morning to get you up and then we'll have breakfast before we go."

Harry went straight for the bed and sat on its edge. "This is really nice, Pete."

Maddie smiled and said, "Don't open the door for anybody but me. Good night."

She closed the door behind her and went straight to Polly's room. After briefing her on the new developments, they agreed to tell David and Michael everything in the morning. Aware of Pete's skittish nature, Polly and Maddie

decided to watch the boy's door in shifts through the night to be sure they didn't leave.

Maddie, awakened by a knock on her door, called out, "Who is it?"

"It's me, Polly. Your turn."

Maddie drug herself out of bed and headed down the hall where she leaned against the wall outside the boy's room. The night seemed to last forever with no way to rest or find comfort in the empty hallway. She discovered that she had slid down the wall into a sitting position sometime in the night when a hand touched her shoulder and whispered her name.

She opened her eyes to see David leaning down over her, offering her a hand to help her to her feet. "I might suggest dressing for the day before meeting us in the dining room," he said with amusement in his voice.

"Yes, of course. Would you mind staying where you are while I dress?"

"No, not at all, but why?"

Pointing at the door she said, "There are two children in this room that I don't want to slip away. That's why I was sleeping outside of it. I'll explain at breakfast." She hurried down the hall to her own room.

Maddie entered the dining room with the two boys and was met with a full room of chatty travelers and busy service people. She scanned the room quickly and saw Polly waving from the far side at a table by the window. They made their way through the room and she introduced the boys to her team as they waited for a waiter to set the

table for two more and to bring extra chairs. She let the boys order their breakfast before explaining to the team why these boys were important to their investigation.

Michael listened carefully to what Maddie was proposing and after considerable thought he said, "When and if this goes down, we don't actually have the ability to make an arrest. That would have to come from a local authority. Because the orphanage is within city limits, we can approach the city police and suggest they work with us and leave the apprehension to them."

"Will there be time for you to pursue that avenue this morning while Polly and I are still at the orphan's home," David asked.

"I can go to them immediately after we have finished here. I think it would be good for you to wait here for my findings before you enter the orphanage," Michael said.

"Hopefully, they aren't friends with this sheriff and tip him off," Polly said as she took a bite from her toast and jam.

"Maddie, go on to the kitchen as planned. The boys should arrive a half hour behind you. Shortly after that we should be able to get David and Polly into position as a distraction and that will allow me time to get the police nearby. If the deal happens, Polly and David can detain them long enough for you to get to us down the street to clean up the mess," said Michael.

Maddie walked through the wide hallway to the back of the old mansion trying to step lightly on the noisy hardwood floor. She hears a man's voice coming from Mrs. Miller's office. Maddie slowed just enough to hear Mrs.

Miller say, "These two are quite spunky but I'm sure you will all get along just fine."

Maddie continued to the kitchen and saw Pete and Harry crossing the field toward the orphanage. She wondered who else was in the office with Mrs. Miller.

The boys opened the back door and stepped quietly in to the kitchen. Maude put her hands on her hips and said, "So, there you are." She took off her apron and led the boys away.

Maddie moved close to Jenny and asked, "Is the man in Mrs. Miller's office here to take the boys away?"

She only nodded her head, obviously afraid of being overheard.

Maddie went back to washing bowls that had already been soaking in a tub of water.

Maude rushed back into the kitchen and stood on her toes to see out of the window. "All hell is going to break loose," she exclaimed. She stepped over to Jenny and whispered, "The Michigan City Police are here. Somebody tipped 'em off."

She went out the door again and Maddie took her place by the window where she saw Michael and two officers walking to the front door. Suddenly the man in Mrs. Miller's office barged through the door with Pete and Harry in tow.

Maddie reached under her skirt for her revolver and shouted, "Stop where you are."

The man ignored her and tried to shove his way through to the back door. Maddie cocked her gun and gave him a serious warning. "One more step and I'll blow your god damned head off." Pete and Harry stepped back by Jenny.

The man wasn't sure if she was bluffing or not until she announced, "Pinkerton's agent. Get down on your knees and raise your hands up high where I can see them." He decided to do as he was told and dropped to his knees on the kitchen floor.

David entered through the back door and marched the man back to Mrs. Miller's office.

Maddie went to the front and saw Mrs. Miller, the man and Maude being led away. "What now?"

Polly turned to her and said, "Our job is done. Mr. LeBate will take it from here. Good work, Maddie."

"But what about the children, who will care for them?" she asked.

"Those details are handled by administrators. We are investigators. Do you understand? It's nothing personal. We don't involve ourselves in the aftermath, we just move on to the next assignment."

Maddie looked around and felt confused. She had so many questions. "But, who?"

"Stop. It's over. Let's check out of the hotel and get back to the agency." Polly turned away and started off to the door with Maddie behind her.

David laid his hand on Maddie's shoulder and said, "That was great work, Maddie. Congratulations on solving your first case."

"Thank you. It just seemed rather anti-climactic."

"What do you mean," he asked.

"It wasn't very exciting and it was quite simple in all honesty."

They climbed into the carriage and rolled toward the hotel. "I can't help but wonder what will become of them."

“They will be fine. Someone honest and caring will take over for that witchy Mrs. Miller and that someone will strive to place the children in good homes,” David said.

“End of story,” said Michael.

“Amen to that,” Polly added.

That night the train rolled toward Chicago and Maddie shed the disappointment she felt and shared a drink with her team members in the dining car. As they laughed and talked about their families, David showed tin types of his two boys and Polly joked of how they reminded her of her brothers back in Ohio. Maddie had little to offer in the conversation, being an only child and motherless on top of that. Her thoughts wandered to Rose.

Maddie stepped out of the busy rail station and braced herself against the wind that pelted her face with icy sleet as she searched for an available carriage. She pulled at the collar of her coat with one hand while waving to a driver coming down the avenue. She wished she was at home, out of the weather where she could get warm and visit with Rose by the fire. The driver came to a stop outside the gate.

“Thank you very much,” she said and handed him his fare and more.

“Keep the change, please. You have no idea how good it is to be home.”

He tipped his hat to her and turned his carriage around as Maddie turned the key in the big front door that welcomed her return.

She took off her scarf and hung it on the brass coat rack in the entry and as she shed her coat, she called out, “Rose, I’m back.”



The house was quiet. Maddie looked around the ground floor and then went up the stairs to the third floor. She called out again, "Rose, are you here?"

"Maddie," Rose excitedly called out.

Maddie walked to Rose's room and asked, "Where are you?"

"I'm in my bathroom."

Maddie sat down in a chaise near the window and said, "I am so glad to be home. Have you kept yourself busy?" Maddie listened as water sloshed about from in her bathtub.

"Yes, I did some shopping and found a few really good restaurants." She entered the room completely naked, towel drying her hair. "You know what?"

"What?" Maddie asked trying not to look at Rose directly.

"A good dinner costs a lot of money downtown."

Rose saw that Maddie was uncomfortable and asked, "Does this bother you?"

"Do you mean because you aren't dressed? No. No. Why should that bother me?"

Rose knew she had flustered Maddie and with a devilish look on her face, slowly walked toward her and turned her back to her. She held out her towel to Maddie and said, "Good. Then you won't mind drying my back."

Maddie didn't move. Rose shook the towel and said, "Come on for Christ's sake just help me."

Maddie timidly stepped up and took the towel and gently wiped the beads of water from her shoulders. Rose delighted in Maddie's awkward moment as it presented itself in the full-length mirror before her. Maddie didn't know she was being watched as she admired Rose's beautiful neck and shoulders. She found her eyes trailing

down her spine to the small of Rose's back where her dimples teased her into looking further down to her full bottom. Maddie realized she was ogling and looked up to see Rose's eyes locked with hers in the mirror and knew she had been seen.

Maddie handed her the towel. "There you are. That should do it." She headed for the door and started down the hallway to the stairs.

Rose's voice came from the door, "I know what you are feeling."

Maddie turned on the stairs to see Rose in a wide-open bathrobe, posing seductively. "Well, I don't."

Rose didn't pursue the conversation later that night as they warmed themselves by the fire and talked about Maddie's adventure with the agency. She could sense Maddie's agitation with herself and the confusion that caused it. It was more curiosity than anything else Maddie decided. She knew she had gone over and above to win Rose's friendship, even though she never gave her good reason to think they would ever be where they are today. Maddie sipped a brandy and wondered why it was so important to her that she be her friend, remembering how much it hurt when she didn't show for dinner that night in Bear Gulch. Rose rambled on about the city and how much she loved it in Chicago, but Maddie never really heard her.

Maddie could wait no longer and set down her glass. She said, "It was Jeanita."

"What about Jeanita?"

"She's the one who held you after you got beat up. She's the woman that gave you comfort."

Rose fell silent. "Did she tell you that," Rose asked.

“Not in so many words. She did tell me that you went into a jealous rage when another woman just wanted to be friends with her.”

Rose was suddenly filled with anger. “Well that’s a goddamned lie. That bitch wanted her for herself. I’m not stupid. I knew what was going on.” Rose stormed over to the cabinet and poured another brandy, bringing the bottle back to pour more into Maddie’s glass.

The silence was deafening. Maddie regretted saying anything. Meekly and apologetically she said, “Rose, I’m sorry. I can see how it could happen. You were traumatized by what happened and out of your mind with pain and grief. I understand, I truly do.”

“Oh, I don’t feel bad about what happened, it was better than any man I never wanted in the first place. What bothered me was the feeling I was going to be abandoned by Jeanita, just like when my mother sent me out of the village. That changed me. It made me get tough so I didn’t feel anything. Then Jeanita came and all that changed.”

Maddie reached across the tiny oak table between them and took Rose’s hand. “I’m so sorry about your past, but that’s behind you now. You are in a time and place of great opportunity. The world is yours for the taking.”

Rose wiped tears from her face and forced a smile. “It’s over. You are right about that.”

Maddie let go of Rose’s hand and sat back in her chair. Rose sat back in her matching wingback. Maddie felt the warmth of the second brandy wash over her and couldn’t stop herself from looking at the beautiful face next to her. Rose raised her glass and Maddie studied her beautiful

throat and the bare skin she could see through the opening at the top of Rose's loosely closed robe.

Then she heard herself say, "You are so pretty. If I was a man, I would want you."

Rose laughed. "They all did. Why wouldn't they? Look at all this." she said as she stood and opened her robe once again, letting it fall to the floor.

Maddie chuckled and nervously sipped from her brandy.

Rose cupped her breasts in her hands and asked, "Have you ever seen a bosom this perfect?"

Maddie was embarrassed by the brazen beauty, but said, "No I have not, but your flat tummy and curves are absolutely gorgeous too."

She couldn't believe she said out loud what she had thought privately many times.

"Would you like to touch me?"

"No. I mean, uh. No. You should cover up."

Rose picked her robe up from the floor and as she wrapped herself within it she asked, "Did you like kissing me?"

"What, makes you bring that up?"

"I liked it. I wondered if you did too."

"Yes, I guess I did. I felt bad about it though."

"Why?"

"We are women. I've only kissed Enapay, the Lakota, before that."

"I'm Lakota," Rose said as she leaned over Maddie and put her hands on the back of the chair letting her breasts show in front of Maddie's face.

"Kiss me again Maddie."

"No."

Maddie tried to stand. Rose let go of the chair and stood in front of her, but did not move out of the way.

Rose laughed. "Don't laugh at me," Maddie said, clearly annoyed and pushed past her. "We aren't going to drink together anymore."

"Why not?"

"Because we, you get too many ideas in your head, that's why."

"Aha! You said we."

"I meant you."

With the brandy bottle in one hand and the glass in the other, Rose turned and walked away saying, "Fine, I'll just take care of it myself."

"What do you mean?"

As she continued for the stairs, Maddie heard her say, "You know damned well what I mean."

Maddie stood there confused by what she said and muttered, "I don't understand. I don't understand her at all."





## Chapter Fifteen

### The End for Roswell Fykes

Maddie stepped out the door into the first day of sunlight she had seen in a week. It was unusually warm for an early winter day, and despite everything that went wrong the night before, she was in a cheery disposition. She thought that it might just be the change of the weather that was making all the difference. Not to say that it no longer annoyed her that Rose was angry over Maddie's resistance to her seductive advances. She put it out of her mind and walked down the hall to the Pinkerton's briefing room. She entered the room to find Mickey LeBate at the head of the conference table.

Smiling broadly, Jeffery Winters greeted Maddie with, "Good Morning Madison, it's wonderful to see you doing well. Mr. LeBate filled us in on your previous assignment."

"Thank you, Mr. Winters," Maddie said. She glanced across the table and saw Elise Mitchell scribbling in a tablet.

"Good Morning, Miss Mitchell."

Elise looked over the top of her glasses and politely said, "Good Morning."

Maddie was uncomfortable with Elise and felt she didn't think she belonged in the ranks of the elite Pinkerton's Agency. Michael Grant entered the room with an apology for his tardiness.

Mr. LeBate said, "It's fine, Michael. We were just getting comfortable. Now that we are all here, let's take a look at our assignment." He walked around the table laying information packets in front of the four agents.

They all opened the packets and looked at the photograph of the man the agency was hired to apprehend. Maddie's eyes focused on the face that looked vaguely familiar and then took a look at the intelligence sheets.

Mickey LeBate cleared his voice and began. "If you look at page one of the intelligence report you will see our man has interest in several companies around the country. Some agriculture, mining operations and shipping endeavors. His name is Roswell Fykes and we are working in the interest of Paramount Mines out of South Dakota. It seems Mr. Fykes helped himself to an enormous payday a couple months ago. Embezzlement is his forte. Paramount was unaware of his previous dealings with a coal mining company in Pennsylvania that resulted in a similar disappearance at a substantial loss to them."

"Excuse me Mr. LeBate, but I've met Roswell Fykes and had brief conversation with him a few times on my journey to Chicago from South Dakota," Maddie said.

"Did he flirt with you," Mickey asked.

"No, but he was certainly pursuant of my friend Rose."

"Tell us more," Elise chimed in.

“Well he bragged about his popularity with women because of his wealth and implied that should Rose spend her time with him, he could lavish her with great gifts and show her exotic destinations of the world. Then in a hotel restaurant in Omaha Nebraska, we saw him work his charm on a woman he was unaware was actually a whore.”

Michael Grant asked, “How did you know she was a whore?”

“I didn’t, but Rose could spot one from a mile away,” Maddie said.

Jeffery asked, “Would this be the same Rose we interviewed at a bordello in Bear Gulch?”

“Yes.”

“She would know one if she saw one because she too was a prostitute,” he said.

“Was. Was a prostitute. She gave that up and moved to Chicago with me.”

“Why would you befriend a whore,” Elise asked.

“She saved my life. I was shot by the man who killed my mother and she shot him before he could finish me for good. She has a good heart and deserves a better life. She handed me mine and I helped her along to a new one, that’s all,” Maddie said.

With very little sincerity Elise replied, “Quite admirable of you, Madison.”

Mickey LeBate said, “Well, that confirms the intelligence we’ve collected about Mr. Fykes peculiarities. He is known to flirt with young beautiful, shall I say, unsophisticated women because of their gullibility concerning things that older, worldlier women would never fall for. We will need you, Madison to get close to him. If he is trying to seduce

you, it will be with his wealth. If you are close to him you can get close to the stolen money.”

Maddie said, “I don’t have any experience with that kind of behavior and certainly not with his type of man.”

“I’m sure you will do just fine,” Michael Grant said, encouraging her to accept the responsibility.

“I’m sure I wouldn’t. Can’t Polly do it?”

Mickey said, “Polly is on another assignment.”

Silence filled the room as they waited for Maddie to give in to the task. Mickey LeBate looked around the room for an alternative seeing that Maddie was not going for the role. He tapped his pencil on the table top, then asked, “What about this Rose woman, is she someone who could infiltrate Fykes and get to the money without revealing who she is working for?”

Elise astonished by his suggestion said, “How could you consider using an untrained person in this investigation? She has no background experience; we haven’t even met her and she isn’t even a Pinkerton employee.”

“I say, let’s meet her and see if she is capable of the task,” Mickey said.

Maddie cut in and said, “What makes you think she would be interested or that I would even ask her for that matter.”

Michael Grant added, “Hold on Maddie, I think there may be something to this. Nobody knows better than a whore how to get a man talking and separate him from his money.”

“She’s not a whore. She’s finished with that,” Maddie angrily replied.

Mickey's eyebrows raised sharply and said, "But, she hasn't forgotten the tools of the trade. I think we should talk to her."

Elise pushed her chair back from the table and muttered, "This is insane."

Michael turned to Jeffery who had been very quiet throughout the meeting and asked, "What say you, Jeffery?"

Jeffery looked up from his notes and said, "I have met the woman you are considering and she certainly is beautiful and she does have a special expertise concerning the manipulation of a man. Not very sophisticated, which in this case is a plus, but she is much smarter than most of his targets. That could go against her unless she has the adaptability needed to demonstrate naivety. If Maddie has no objections, I would like to interview her myself."

Mickey smiled and then turned to Maddie. "Madison, if we promise to protect her and swear that no harm would come to her, would you be willing to allow us to talk to her and see if she has any interest in working with us?"

Reluctantly, Maddie said, "I will mention it to her tonight."

Mickey said, "Thank you. We will need to talk with her as soon as possible. Jeffery, stop by Madison's home in the morning. We need to move quickly. As you all know from your intelligence report, he is bound for Savannah and we don't know for how long. We will meet again tomorrow at ten thirty after Jeffery has conducted his interview. Until then, Good day."

Mickey stood and abruptly left the room as the others gathered their papers. Michael and Jeffery stood up as

Maddie walked toward the door, leaving Elise still sitting, bewildered.

Maddie hung her coat in the hall and immediately headed toward the tantalizing smells coming from the kitchen. "Mrs. Hutchins, what are you making that smells so delightful," she asked.

Mrs. Hutchins turned from the stove, smiling and said, "Just a little something for two young women I know haven't been eating properly of late."

"Thank you, it's so kind of you to do that," Maddie said.

Mrs. Hutchins pushed back a gray tendril from the side of her face and said, "Well, I really didn't have much to do today and when I suggested making dinner, well Rose lit up like a rising sun. Should be ready in 30 minutes."

"Is Rose home now?"

Yes, she went upstairs just a few minutes ago."

Maddie turned and went to the stairs, beginning the climb to Rose's third floor room.

The door to Rose's room was standing open and Maddie gave a gentle knock on the door frame. "Rose?"

"Come in, I'm just brushing out my hair," Rose said. Maddie walked up to the dresser where Rose was seated at her dresser.

"Let me help," Maddie said, taking the brush from Rose's hand.

Maddie gently brushed through her hair and felt Rose's eyes upon her in the dresser mirror.

Maddie spoke first. "Still mad at me?"

"No."



“Good.” She stroked her hair a few times more and asked, “Remember that man, Roswell Fykes?”

“Sure do, that pudgy little man that bragged about how rich he was. I could have owned that fool.”

“He’s my next assignment. Turns out he has embezzled funds from a company he was associated with and it is our job to find him, recover what’s left of the money and return it to its rightful owners.”

Rose turned in her seat to face Maddie. “How are you going to do it?”

“Follow him to Savannah, Georgia where he also has interests in sugar and indigo exports. Intelligence says he is on his way there now.”

“Savannah? You are going all the way to Savannah? Must be a lot of money he stole for people to chase him all the way there.”

“It was quite significant. He was probably carrying it when we saw him. He took it from a mining company out west,” Maddie said.

Rose smiled and shook her head. “What a dirty dog.”

Maddie continued brushing her hair and wondered how to approach Rose about going along on the assignment. “Rose, I want to ask you something. You don’t have to say yes to it but all the same I need to know.”

Rose turned around in the chair and searched Maddie’s face. “What do you want to ask?”

“Pinkerton’s, because of your past profession, would like you to accompany us to Savannah and use your expert knowledge of male behavior to not only locate Mr. Fykes, but discover and secure the embezzled funds.”

“Are you asking me to whore my way to the money?”

“Not exactly, but something similar.”

Rose was unsure why Maddie seemed to be encouraging her to do what she tried so hard to get her to stop doing. Rose smiled and said, “I would love to.”

A sigh of relief escaped Maddie’s lungs and she said, “I know it seems contradictory to my hopes for you, but I seem to be a book of contradictions of late. Tomorrow, the Pinkerton’s will interview you and once they approve your working this case, will brief you before we depart.”

Rose asked, “Why not you? Why aren’t you going after him?”

“I don’t have any experience getting information and money out of a man’s pocket. I know it takes a special finesse to accomplish both without appearing to be fishing. You have that finesse and besides, we already know he is very interested in you. I think he will tell you everything, if the right incentive is involved, and do whatever it takes to seduce you. Even if it costs him a fortune and his freedom.”

“I want to do it. When does this get started?”

“Hold on, first you have to pass the interview. Then they’ll decide if they want you to participate or not. I suspect that things will move quickly after that,” Maddie said. Maddie laid the brush down on the dressing table and said, “Let’s go down for dinner.”

Rising early the next morning, Rose carefully made choices for her first impression with the Pinkerton’s Agency. She looked upon the three dresses she had laid out on her bed. Not sure, she called out at the top the stairs to Maddie. “Can you come up here and help me decide what

to wear today?" She went back to her room where Maddie found her nervously waiting.

Maddie immediately reached for a long green dress. "This one. It shows your figure but is not too attention grabbing. I don't think we want to look as if we are available."

"If you are sure, that's the one I will wear."

"I am sure. Remember, they will be measuring you up based on your knowledge and experience. They can see for themselves how attractive you are."

Rose waves her hand in front of her face and blows out, "Is it hot in here or is it just me?"

"It's you."

After several days travel by train, the group consisting of Elise Mitchell, Jeffery Winters, Michael Grant, Maddie and Rose, arrive in Savannah.

Rose and Maddie are thrilled with the warm weather and upon entering a carriage, are struck with the beauty of the magnolia trees and fabulous homes lining the streets decorated with numerous squares.

Jeffery Winters tells the driver to take them to East Broughton Street then turns to Rose and says, "We are booking you into the Fitterling Hotel. I don't believe we ever discussed your surname. Can you tell us what that might be? Only for booking purposes I assure you."

Rose looks dumbfounded. She doesn't have a last name and for a moment feels her past connection to the Lakota Nation. "I don't have one," she timidly says.

Elise rolls her eyes in disdain over the entire culmination of events that led this investigation to rely on a half breed

whore to apprehend an embezzler and recover the company's losses.

Maddie blurts out, "Chumani, that's her real Lakota name. It means dewdrops. Rose Chumani has a nice ring to it."

Jeffery looks to Rose and says, "It certainly does. Rose Chumani it is then."

Michael Grant adds, "You know, with her brown eyes and complexion, she could pass for Italian."

"Really," Elise sarcastically huffed.

"I don't know if I can deal with a new name and nationality too, just to get a man to talk. I don't think it's necessary. I'll get the information you are looking for. Believe me, I can get him to tell me everything," Rose said and gave Elise an intimidating glance before turning to Maddie to say, "I like it. Rose Chumani."

Elise turned her head away and focused on strollers in the square as the carriage passed by. The carriage came to a stop in front of the Fitterling Hotel where guests were greeted by the uniformed doorman. Rose was astonished by its elegance and said, "I can't believe I'm staying here."

Jeffery handed her an envelope filled with cash. "Check in and get settled. Tonight would be a fine time to explore the restaurants and sights of Savannah. You might get lucky and bump into Mr. Fykes on your excursion. We will meet you at eight o'clock tomorrow morning at Forsyth Park with any bits of intelligence Mr. Grant and I turn up this evening in gambling rooms about the city."

Rose climbs down from the carriage as a hotel bell boy gently gets her bags. She turns back to the carriage and says, "Wait! Where is Forsyth Park?"

“Don’t worry, ask anyone. They’ll know where to send you,” Jeffery said smiling.

“Maddie aren’t you staying with me?”

Maddie looked to Jeffery, then back to Rose, “I can’t stay with you and compromise the investigation. I’ll be just two blocks away.”

Rose suddenly looked frightened and overwhelmed as if she were abandoned.

“You’ll be fine,” Maddie assured her as the carriage rolled away.

Jeffery saw the worried look on Maddie’s face and said, “She’s a big girl, Maddie. Don’t forget where she comes from and what she does best.”

“I know.”

“We are all counting on her to draw the weasel out of the woods.”

Elise rolled her eyes and shook her head.

The bellboy followed Rose into her spacious beautifully decorated room and waited patiently at the door. “What?” she asked as if she were annoyed.

“If you should need anything at all before I go, please feel free to ask. The Fitterling Hotel insists your stay meets every expectation.” Rose realizes the bellboy is expecting a tip and opens her purse after removing her lace gloves. She hands him a silver dollar and watches his face light up.

“Thank you, Ma’am,” he said with sincere gratitude as he backed out of the door.

“Wait. I want you to tell me immediately if you should hear this name. Roswell Fykes. He’s a dumpy little man with a very big mouth if you know what I mean.”

“Roswell Fykes. Yes Ma’am, I certainly will. Is he a friend of yours,” the gentleman asked?

“A business associate.” Rose reached into her purse and drew out another silver dollar.

“Yes Ma’am, Roswell Fykes. Thank you, Ma’am.”

“One more thing. What is your name?”

“Charles Jefferson, Ma’am. Ten years freed.”

Rose was taken aback by his proclamation and said, “Then we have something in common, Charles.” He smiled and backed out of the room. In the hallway he removed his bellman’s cap and scratched at the gray hair on the top of his balding head and wondered what she meant by that.

Being in Chicago with Maddie changed everything concerning the way Rose lived and was by now accustomed to the niceties of position and wealth. She still ached for excitement though and was anxious to see what Savannah had to offer. Rose stepped out onto the street and walked West for a few blocks and turned right onto Bull St. Immediately she was struck by the magnificent ante-bellum mansions and the superbly dressed women with open parasols strolling down the street with immaculately groomed gentlemen at their side. She was fascinated with the hanging Spanish moss that decorated every tree on her path. Rose stopped for a moment on a bench at Johnson Square and felt the warm sun on her back and laughed at the icy winds of wintry Chicago. Savannah was nothing like anywhere she had ever been before and was feeling strangely attracted to the gentile ways of the South.

A tall man with great confidence strolled past Rose, tipping his hat and flashing a beautiful smile from under a



perfectly waxed mustache. The very handsome man turned around and stepped near her. "Good afternoon Ma'am" and with a polite bow said, "Let me guess, you are here visiting family perhaps from a Northern city. Am I correct?"

Rose was astonished and somewhat embarrassed by his assessment. "Yes, Chicago. How did you know?"

"First things first. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Douglas Fairington.

She instantly said, "Rose Chumani, very pleased to meet you."

"As am I," he said while still appraising her beauty.

"Again, how did you know?"

"You aren't dressed like the typical woman of Savannah. We have our own style down here."

"I see." Rose began to wonder if she stuck out too much for the investigation to be a success and began to pick at herself with self-doubt about her appearance.

Douglas recognized the distress he had caused and said, "May I say without hesitation, you are a very lovely woman."

Rose stood and said, "Thank you Mr. Fairington. I should be on my way. It was lovely meeting you."

He tipped his hat once again and said, "Good day."

She began to walk through the square, still feeling his eyes upon her. She heard his footsteps behind her and smiled to herself wondering if he had a clue as to how familiar she was to this type of pursuit. He was certainly handsome enough to enjoy his flirtation. He followed her at a safe distance all the way to River Street where she found herself moving off to the right, passing by the courthouse. Douglas Fairington crossed the street and almost

disappeared from Rose's sight as he moved through the heavy loaded wagons waiting to drop their goods at the Savannah Cotton Exchange.

It suddenly dawned on her that he might have knowledge of Roswell Fykes whereabouts if he is connected somehow to the Cotton industry. She quickly stepped out into the street and through the men working at the warehouses at the exchange.

She caught sight of him climbing steps to the main entrance and shouted, "Mr. Fairington!"

He quickly turned about and upon seeing Rose rushing towards him, smiled with the greatest of southern charm.

"Mr. Fairington, are you in the cotton business?"

"Yes, I am an exporter. Why do you ask?"

"I have to be honest with you, I'm looking for a man with interests in sugar and cotton that I suspect may be in the area. His name is Roswell Fykes."

Douglas stood taller with raised eyebrows and said, "I know of this man. Looks like a toad and barks like a dog when he's bragging about his accomplishments."

"Yes. That's the one."

"I hope my description does not offend you if he is an acquaintance," Douglas said almost apologetically.

"No. It certainly does not, and is quite accurate. Would you have any idea where I might find him," Rose asked.

"I know that he is in the city and is a horrid gambler. There is a popular, uh, club if you will, that has gambling rooms on East York Street named The Clevenger."

Where would I find York street, Douglas. I'm sorry, may I call you Douglas," Rose asked with a special charm of her own.

He hesitated long enough to search her eyes and smiled broadly. "Of course." He turned and pointed past the courthouse saying, "Go back the way you came on Bull Street. You will come to East Broughton," he said as Rose interrupted him to blurt out, "I know where that is. That's the street my Hotel is on. The Fitterling."

Again, Douglas raised his eyebrows knowing that this woman from Chicago must be of some important status to stay in such exclusive accommodations. "Very nice hotel, indeed. You will find East York four blocks beyond East Broughton. Turn left. You will see the sign for Clevenger's, three maybe four doors down," Douglas said.

"Thank you. You have been very helpful," Rose said in the sweetest voice she could find.

"I am at your service," said Douglas as he removed his hat and bowed once again. Rose turned in the direction of Bull street when he added, "You won't find him there at this time of day. No one will be in there until the ladies arrive after nine tonight, when the club opens."

"Douglas, you seem to know an awful lot about this place," Rose said in a questioning yet flirtatious manner.

"Common knowledge, Ma'am." Douglas Fairington then hurried up the steps and through the enormous entrance of the Cotton Exchange Building, leaving Rose on the street alone with new information that may just lead to Roswell Fykes.

Having more time to herself, she shopped for clothing most suitable to the region. After purchases in several boutiques, she carried her packages back to the hotel. She admired herself in a full-length mirror across from her bed.

She was striking in a charcoal gray bodice with silver design on the front and a long skirt with the smaller up to date bustle. Rose was in love with her little hand embroidered black boots that were all the rage even though they pinched her toes and threatened to blister her feet. Finally, she took the top off of the hatbox sitting on the edge of the bed. Slowly she lifted the velvet fanchon style hat ever so gently out of the box and set it in place on her head. To Rose, it seemed the perfect finishing touch with its white lace and delicate feathers. She opened the parasol she found at Williams Boutique and held it over her shoulder. She couldn't be happier with the completed transformation. She slipped out of her clothes and into the bath, leisurely soaking and plotting her visit to the Clevenger Club later tonight.

## Chapter Sixteen

### Into the Dark

Rose took a late dinner in the hotel's dining room and waited for nine o'clock to arrive. She dabbed her lips with her napkin and took a deep breath before moving to the hotel lobby with an urgent determination. More than anything, she wanted to find Roswell Fykes, and cast her spell upon him to show that bitch Elise what she was capable of on her own.

The door to the Clevenger was wide open with the sounds of a raucous clarinet spilling out into the street accompanied by an out of tune piano. She stepped inside to be greeted by heavy smoke and loud conversation. She made her way to the bar and waited for the bartender to notice her. The girls working the club shot glares in her direction while some of the customers looked upon her approvingly. The bar tender finally saw her.

"What can I get for you," he asked in a loud voice.

Rose leaned across the bar and yelled, "Shot of Bourbon."

As Rose tossed it back, one of the dancing girls moved in close to her and said, "We don't want any trouble, Missy."

Rose set down the glass and looked over the pasty well-worn whore and said, "I'm not looking for trouble."

"If you are thinking your gonna take our business out of here, you picked the wrong club," the girl said in a threatening manner.

Rose lifted her glass for the bartender to fill again and turned to the girl saying, "I'm just looking for a man that might come in here tonight that I know."

The girl leaned against the bar and asked, "Who is it you're looking for?"

The bar tender poured her another shot. "Roswell Fykes."

The girl looked at her with questions in her searching eyes. "What do you want him for?"

Rose swallowed the shot in one open throated gulp and said, "That's my business. Do you know him?"

"Maybe. What's it worth to you?"

Rose took a long pause and said, "If you can take me to him I've got a twenty dollar piece for you."

The girl bit her bottom lip and drummed her fingers on the bar.

She looked over her shoulder and asked, "Gold?"

Rose looked perturbed and said, "Gold."

The tacky dancer said, "Wait here, I'll ask if he wants to see you. I'll take that gold piece."

Calmly Rose said, "Bring him and it's yours."

The girl said, "Wait here."

"I'm not going anywhere," Rose answered.

Rose watched as she opened a door on the far side of the crowded club and closed it behind her. A few moments



later she emerged with Roswell Fykes close behind her. She pointed toward Rose then led the way to the bar.

He warily approached, looking her over from head to toe. He smoothed his hair with one hand across the top of his head while holding a fat cigar in the other. He was sure he had met her before somewhere but couldn't place the time or event. Rose slid the gold piece into the waiting hand of the dancer who quickly disappeared.

He forced a practiced smile and asked, "To what do I owe this great pleasure, Ma'am?"

Rose pretended to be hurt that he didn't remember her. "You don't remember me or that night in Omaha. It will forever be burned into my heart. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have come here." Rose feigned as though she had been crushed and walked out of the front door and onto the street.

He hurried behind her wanting to know what had happened in Omaha with this beautiful creature. There was no way he was going to let her slip through his fingers.

"Wait!"

Rose didn't turn around, but smiled to herself knowing he would follow her onto the street.

"I'm sorry, but I don't remember anything about Omaha. I wish I did. How can I make it up to you?"

Rose kept walking and said, "It's too late. What I thought was the most wonderful night of my life isn't even a distant memory for you. Dinner in the hotel, too many drinks at the bar, passion in your suite. Your touch on my body was golden and you don't remember anything at all."

"Wait! it's all coming back to me now. It was a match made in heaven. We did drink a lot, but I remember now."

Knowing he took the bait and was running with the lie, she coyly asked, "You do? You remember that magical night?"

"I do. Let's pick up where we left off. Where are you staying?"

Thinking quickly, she breathlessly said, "With my sister."

"Well then, perhaps we could, get re-acquainted in my room," Roswell said as his excitement grew.

Rose pursed her lips and kissed his cheek. "When, Roswell?"

"I'm in a high stakes game of poker tonight, until who knows when."

"That's too late for me. How about tomorrow night? Are you free?"

"I will make certain of it."

"After dinner, say around eight?"

She could see his face flush with excitement as he agreed, "Yes, that would be perfect."

Rose went in for the kill and asked, "Where are your rooms?"

"The Bolinger House. 1201 Bull Street.

"I will see you then, Roswell."

Rose turned away and added a little extra wiggle in her stride as she walked away. Roswell stood watching her with fascination until she turned the corner. Rose couldn't wait for the morning to arrive when she would finally see the look on Elise's face when she announced her discovery and upcoming meeting with non-other than Roswell Fykes.

After getting directions from Charles in the lobby, Rose was the first to arrive at Forsyth Park. She waited on a

bench in a new dress and hat suitable for day time wear in Savannah on a bright sunny morning. She was more than pleased with her new outfits. She felt like a different woman entirely which she decided was a good thing considering she was acting undercover in a Pinkerton investigation. Imagine that, she thought, me in an important job like this in an exotic place like Savannah, Georgia. She was beside herself with giddiness. She looked around her and imagined what it might be like to live in this charming stately place permanently. Just then she saw a carriage come to a stop and watched as Maddie climbed out. A second carriage pulled up behind the first and Michael Grant and Jeffery Winters step down. Finally, they are here. Rose stood up so they would easily see her.

Maddie rushed to Rose, smiling all the way. "Good morning, Rose," she said.

"Good morning," said Rose while looking beyond her for Elise who was not with them.

Maddie was impressed with Rose's new clothes and said, "Look at you. You look so wonderful!"

"Thank you, Maddie. I did some shopping yesterday for a few things."

"How do you like your room at the Fitterling?"

"It's fabulous," Rose exclaimed, "But I don't understand why I am in such a fancy hotel."

Michael and Jeffery step up and join the conversation. Michael said, "We wanted you to be in the finest room available in the event you needed to uh, entertain the scoundrel in question."

“I see,” Rose said without letting the cat out of the bag yet about the previous night’s encounter. Rose asked with polite concern, “Where is Elise this morning?”

The two men looked at each other and then Jeffery said, “She will be coming along anytime now I am sure.”

An awkward silence surrounded the group as they waited for Elise to arrive. Elise arrived by carriage on the far side of the park and walked briskly toward the group. She joined them and offered a brief and insincere apology.

Jeffery said, “Now that we are all here, let’s talk about where we go from here. Michael and I went to several gambling establishments last evening and learned absolutely nothing.”

Michael added, “Not one person we talked to claimed to know him.”

Jeffery continued saying, “We even scouted out the Cotton Exchange area on River Street and couldn’t lay eyes on him.”

Rose asked, “Did you consider asking within the Cotton Exchange?”

Michael answered her with, “No, we didn’t want to raise suspicions. You never know who might be an associate that would tip him off to our presence.”

Rose kept tight lipped and simply responded, “I see.”

Elise looked at Rose with absolute hatred in her eyes. How could that girl question the investigative prowess of the two senior detectives? Elise sighed before saying, “I checked all the hotel registries in the area and came up with nothing. I fear he may be using an alias.”

Jeffery stroked his chin and said, "Very well then, we shall have to broaden our search and meet again here at the same time tomorrow."

Rose said very calmly, "One moment please. Yesterday I met a gentleman by the name of Douglas Fairington who happens to be an exporter of Cotton. By chance he is familiar with Mr. Fykes and his habits. He informed me that I might find him at a dancing and gambling establishment that operates under the name of The Clevenger Club on East York Street. I went there to see if he was known or in attendance. He was known and for twenty dollars was able to get a dancing girl to retrieve him from the private gambling room where he was engaged in a game of poker."

Everyone was astonished at what she had just told them. "Did you make contact with him?" Jeffery excitedly asked. "I did."

Maddie said, "Go on. What happened?"

"Long story short, I told him that we had an unforgettable night together once and that I wished for another. I told him he was very drunk that night, but then he pretended to remember the event that never happened."

Elise questioningly said, "And, go on."

"I am meeting him in his rooms at eight o'clock tonight at 1201 Bull Street. A place called the Bolinger House. He wanted to come to me, but I can't search his belongings for the embezzled funds unless I am in the same room with them."

"Outstanding," Michael said, smiling from ear to ear.

Rose cocked her head to one side and winked at Elise who immediately batted it away with a turn of her head.

Jeffery said, "She's right. The money has to be in his room. It's one thing to apprehend him and turn him over to the authorities but it is quite another to recover the funds as proof of the deed and collect our fee for recovery. Outstanding, Dear Rose, Outstanding."

Elise was obviously annoyed by her success, but couldn't find a way to diminish the accomplishment even in her own mean-spirited mind.

Michael grabbed Jeffery by the arm and said, "Surveillance. We must go to the address in advance and see what our best options are. At all costs we must protect Rose and capture the little weasel with the funds."

Rose said, "If we are finished here, I have some shopping to do." With that, she walked away leaving the group stunned and their heads swimming with possibilities and new direction. As Rose waved down a carriage she murmured under her breath, "That'll teach that bitch to put me down."

As the carriage rolled down the street toward her hotel, Rose leaned forward and asked, "Driver, could you tell me where I might find a horse doctor?"

"Yes Ma'am. We just passed the livery he works out of."

"Could you please turn around and take me there."

"As you wish, Ma'am." He turned the carriage around in the street and stopped after traveling two blocks.

"Thank you. Would you be kind enough to wait on me. I shall only be a moment."

"Yes, Ma'am."

Rose went into the livery and saw a sign that read "Equine Medical Treatment" hanging above an open door.



There she saw a man in spectacles that appeared to be in his early thirties with brown wavy hair and a clean-shaven face. "Excuse me, are you the doctor," Rose asked.

He rose quickly as if he were surprised to see someone of her obvious position in his lowly clinic. "Yes, yes I am. Can I help you?"

"I hope so. I have a particularly unruly stallion that I'm afraid is going to be useless to me as a mount unless I can manage to control his behavior so to speak."

"I see," the doctor said as though he were contemplating the problem.

"I want to castrate him, but no one will be able to hold him steady without sedation. Would you have any suggestions?"

The Veterinarian said, "Well, there is a type of medication that will make him very tranquil if administered in the right dosage."

"Would you have such a medicine on hand?"

"I would. Where is the horse?"

Rose batted her eyes at him while leaning over his desk and said, "I have him in my barn about a days ride from here."

The doctor shook his head and said, "That's a bit out of my way, Ma'am. I wish I could help you but I can't be gone that long."

"You can still help. Let me take the medicine to my stable man and have him give it to my horse."

"That's a highly irregular request. I don't know. I mean, how big is the horse?"

"Oh, I'd say no more than eleven hundred pounds."

He scratched his head and winced while doing so. "I'm going to sell you the drug, but you didn't get it from me. You understand that?"

"Yes, I won't breathe a word of it to anyone. Now how do I give it to him," she asked.

He turned his back to her and opened a cupboard. He turned back around to face her and presented her with an enormous pill.

"Put it in his mouth to swallow. They don't like its bitter taste so you may have to hold his head up to force him it down."

Rose held the pill in her hand and pleaded, "Isn't there an easier way, perhaps an injection?"

"Well yes, that's a possibility. You would have to smash it down to a powder and stir in a few drops of water to be able to move it through the needle."

"And, where would I find such a needle?"

"You will need a syringe and needle kit large enough to deliver the entire contents. Like this one," the doctor said while producing one from the drawer of his desk.

Rose looked hopefully at the doctor and asked, "Could I buy it?"

"Um, I'll have to look up the cost. Hold on one second please."

He opened a hardbound journal and ran his finger down the first page and turned to the second. He tapped his finger on the page about midway down and said, "That would be ninety-two cents for the syringe and needle kit and one dollar and forty cents for the horse pill. That would be a total of two dollars and thirty-two cents."

Rose said, "I'll take it." She opened her purse and handed him three dollars. A worried look spread across his face and she said, "Keep the change."

His look of worry became a smile. "Good luck with your stud, Ma'am."

Rose put her purchases into her purse and said, "Thank you Doctor. He'll never know what happened." She climbed into the waiting carriage and went back to the Fitterling.

When she entered the lobby, Charles the bellman was waiting to greet her. "Hello Miss Chumani, there is a lady waiting to see you in the dining room."

Rose rushed to the dining room and looked all around, hoping to find Maddie. A voice came from behind her at a table just inside the door. She wheeled around and saw Elise sitting alone at a table for two.

"Come and sit with me, Rose," she said. Rose pulled out the chair across from her and sat down without saying a single word.

"It's no secret that we don't like each other, but for the sake of the investigation we have to be at least civil to one another. That was great work you did, I have to admit."

"Thank you," Rose said.

"I went to the Bolinger House and rented the adjoining suite. There is no interior access but both suites have doors to the balcony where I can monitor what happens tonight and signal the team if there is any unexpected trouble."

"You mean you are going to watch everything," Rose asked.

"It's for your protection," said Elise.

“It’s going to be a long night for you. My plan is to get him pass out drunk and I have special things I do to inspire him to get that intoxicated if you know what I mean.”

With a smirk Elise said, “I can only imagine.”

Rose stood and said, “Not after tonight.” Elise had no more to say and Rose knew it. She left the dining room and went to the staircase that led to her room.

Charles saw her and asked, “Don’t you want to take the elevator, Ma’am?”

“Not today, Charles. I’m feeling a little spunky.”

At seven o’clock, Rose was almost ready to change Roswell Fykes life forever in more ways than one. She just had one more thing to do before arriving at the Bolinger House at eight. She grabbed a big clean ashtray from the nightstand and carried it into her bathroom. She took the big horse pill out of her purse and soaked it in water to start dissolving it before smashing it with a spoon she borrowed from the dining room. The mixture was too thick so she added a little more water to get it more fluid. When she was sure it was right, she drew it through the needle into the metal cylinder that would contain it until it was plunged into his body. Rose didn’t care about where she stuck him, so long as he didn’t see it coming. She knew Elise wouldn’t approve of her methods and decided to keep it a secret until the deed was done. A quick check in the mirror, a tiny spray of perfume and she was ready. At seven-forty, Rose strode to the curb and called out for a carriage.

The carriage stopped in front of the Bolinger House and Rose spotted Maddie and Michael strolling by as if they were a couple. Then she saw Jeffery sitting on a bench

nearby. She floated up the steps to the door where she was greeted by a heavy-set man servant who ushered her into the beautiful mansion. The man instructed Rose to wait as he told Roswell of her arrival. Rose was thinking that her nerves should be on edge but they weren't. Actually, she felt as in control as she did when she was a whore in Bear Gulch, and she liked that familiar feeling of power. Rose wondered if he would be freshly bathed. She hated the salty taste and musky, sweaty smell of a man's wanker and balls. If he's clean that's one thing, but if he isn't, she'd spit in her hand and pull him off with her hand and toss him one later, after he recovered.

"There you are, my dear," Roswell said with glee in his voice as he stood halfway down the wide, winding staircase. Rose smiled up at him and started up the stairs to join him. He was dressed in a velvet robe over silk pajamas. He took both of her hands in his and said, "You are a vision unlike any I have ever seen."

Rose thought, at least he's charming, I'll give him that. Roswell opened the door to his suite. It was breathtaking. Rose was used to living in luxurious surroundings but stroked his pride. "Your rooms are beautiful, Roswell. You are so fortunate to be so important and successful."

"It's just a temporary place to rest while I'm here. Speaking of, I've been wondering about something. How did you know I was here in Savannah?"

"Silly man, you gave me your business card, so I went to see you at your office in Chicago, but it was closed permanently, according to your secretary who was cleaning the place out. She told me you were coming down here and

well, I had money in my pocket and time on my hands so, here I am."

Rose stepped up close to him and laid her arms on his shoulders, pushing her body against his. He nuzzled her neck and said, "You smell delicious."

"I am, at least that's what you told me in Omaha." She giggled and asked if he was going to offer her a drink. She smelled liquor on his breath and knew he had been priming himself in anticipation of what lie ahead.

"Yes, yes, yes. Forgive my manners. Brandy, bourbon?"

"A bourbon would be marvelous."

"Bourbon it is. Anything for you, my dear." He poured two shots and handed one to her. He held up his glass and said, "To us."

She watched him drain his glass and gently sipped on hers. He anxiously poured himself another and said, "Drink up, the night is young." She tossed her head back and laughed the sexiest mature laugh she could pull out of her repertoire and watched him almost quiver at the sound of it. She took him by the hand and led him to the sofa. She sat close to him turned to face him in a pose that accented her curves. He leaned in to kiss her and she returned it with expertise. Roswell pulled away and leaned against the back of the sofa. Rose moved closer pushing her breasts into his chest. He put his hand on her waist and she pulled it up to her breast and pretended to be in erotic bliss.

She reached down to rub his stubby erection. He raised his hips as if it would give her better access to the chubby growth in his pajamas. She kissed him long and hard, darting her tongue in and out of his mouth and across his lips. His breathing came hard and short, like a thirsty dog in



the heat of summer. She worked the buttons open to set it free and opened his pajama shirt and kissed her way down his chest. When she was close enough, she sniffed and found it to be clean enough to send him to heaven. She ran her lips along the underside of it and licked the top of it before sliding it down her throat. His head rolled back and he stared at the ceiling trying to hold the explosion at bay but it didn't work. In less than two minutes he was begging her to stop before the cannon blew into her mouth. She didn't stop and he groaned like a dyeing bull. She spit it out into her empty shot glass. She said, "I'm ready and I want you inside me now."

"I can't. I can't. I need to, I need to catch my breath. I need a minute or two."

"I don't know if I can wait that long," said Rose.

"Goddamnit, you are amazing," he said in between breaths.

"Pour us another drink," she ordered.

"Yes, yes, of course. He poured two fresh drinks in clean glasses and handed one to her and tossed his back.

"I need to freshen up," she said. He pointed to the bathroom door and Rose took her glass with her and closed the door. She poured it down the drain and spit repeatedly, rinsing her mouth with water cupped in her hand from the faucet.

Rose looked in the mirror and wondered if one more drink in him would be enough to make him stupid enough to go along with whatever she said. She stripped out of her dress and underwear and whispered, "If this doesn't make him my puppy nothing will."

She opened the bathroom door and stood naked before him. She laid her clothes and purse on the floor beside his bed and crawled onto it. Roswell was awed by the sight of her and was trance like in his stammer to the bed. She knew he was over the edge drunk but decided to toss him anyway. After all, this was probably the last chance he would have for the next few years to bury his shorty in someone this perfect. He climbed up on top and drug his round belly over Rose's tummy on his way to mounting her. She guided him in with her hand after he had missed the mark on several attempts. She knew she was in control and after ninety seconds of his non rhythmic thrusts, she rolled him over and controlled the motion from the top. Another minute and he shot inside her and collapsed. It withered away to a minuscule bump in seconds afterward.

Rose said, "I'll be right back."

Through heavy eyelids he focused on her smiling face and said, "Hurry back."

In the bathroom she wanted to vomit but shook it off. When she returned, he was almost asleep but her presence forced him to stay conscious.

"If you roll over, I will rub your back."

"That would be wonderful," he said.

He rolled over and she studied his grotesque physique. His back and ass were covered with matted black hair on lily-white skin that covered a frame that been abused by alcohol and bad diet for decades. She reached down with one hand and took out the readied syringe while rubbing his back with the other. She rubbed him with long strokes using both hands for several minutes until he was completely

relaxed and in a heavy sleep. She quietly got up and dressed herself for a quick exit if the drugs didn't work.

She came back to his side and whispered his name. He didn't respond to her and she could see drool running out of his mouth onto the pillow. Rose took the syringe and gave it a little squirt to remove the air and took aim at his big hairy ass. She took a deep breath and stabbed him hard, depressing the plunger at the same time.

He raised his head in a jerking motion of pain and yelled, "What are you doing you goddamned bitch."

He tried to raise up but fell flat on his face. His eyes rolled up and she thought she might have killed him. She listened closely and saw his chest rise with his breathing. Assured that he was still alive at least, she pulled the syringe out of his ass. She reached under the bed and felt a carpet bag that he had stowed away. She slid it out and opened it to find it completely stuffed with cash. There was no time to count it and no reason to. She opened the door to the balcony and handed it off to Elise who had witnessed everything. She in turn tossed it down to Jeffery who came over as soon as he saw the light flow from the open door.

Rose made her way down the stairs, saying good night to the man servant as she closed the door behind her.

"Excellent work, Rose," Jeffery said. Maddie and Michael appeared at the street as Elise came out to join them. Jeffery then said, "Get the local police over here to collect him. I'll stand watch to make sure he doesn't try to leave."

Elise said, "He isn't going anywhere." She sent Rose a knowing look, but never said a word about what happened up there.

Rose said, "I have to go to my room and wash that nasty man off of me."

Maddie said, "I'm coming with you, Rose."

Rose came out of the bathroom with her hair wrapped in a towel wearing a fluffy hotel bathrobe. She sat down on the edge of the bed and started to roll a cigarette. Maddie stopped her, producing a perfectly rolled cigarette she bought from the cigar store across the street and held it out for Rose. Rose smiled and took the cigarette and lit it. She took a deep draw from it and exhaled slowly. Maddie struck a match and sat down next to Rose.

"This smokes a lot nicer than the ones I roll," Rose said while studying the perfectly smooth paper wrapped around the tobacco.

"I think they taste a lot better too. A little expensive, but worth it."

Rose got smoke in her eyes and rubbed them but the burn was intense and went to the bathroom to rinse her face. Maddie heard Rose call out and say, "Why don't you stay here with me tonight. There's plenty of room."

Maddie rubbed her cigarette out in the ashtray and blew the last puff out of mouth. "I have a room just a couple blocks away, but thank you for the offer."

Rose came back into the room and pleaded with Maddie, "Please, I don't want to be alone tonight."

Maddie looked into Rose's eyes and said, "I don't think it's a good idea."

"Come on. Why not?"

"Rose, you know how it gets sometimes when we are in the same room."

"Gets like what? What are you talking about?"

"You know what I'm talking about."

Rose sat down on the bed and said, "Oh, you mean that. All we did was kiss once. No big deal."

"Maybe not for you, but it was for me."

"Admit it. You liked it." Rose taunted.

"Rose, you're starting again."

"You liked it more than you thought you would. Am I right?"

"Yes, I liked it, but it's wrong. It's not natural."

"It felt natural to me," Rose said flirtatiously.

Maddie was beginning to feel threatened and somewhat vulnerable, but was not about to let Rose know it. "It left me feeling guilty and confused. We need to just stop this kind of talk and I mean it."

Rose laughed. "Fight it all you want, it's your loss."

"I don't have to fight it. It's not something I'm wanting to pursue. I have no interest what so ever in kissing another woman."

Rose asked, "Can I have another cigarette?"

Maddie reached into her purse and pulled out two more. Rose saw that Maddie's hand was shaking as she passed the cigarette over to her.

"I'm sorry Maddie, I didn't mean to upset you." Rose put her arm around Maddie's shoulder and asked, "Forgive me?"

Maddie struck a match and inhaled deeply. She shook her head and said, "Yes. Of course, I do."

Rose leaned her head against Maddie's and said, "Friends, right?"

"Yes."

Rose turned her head to kiss Maddie's cheek. Maddie turned into it, searching for Rose's lips. Rose backed away. "Maddie, you just said ..." Before she could finish, Maddie kissed her lips.

This time Rose did not back away but returned it with a gentle sweetness. Maddie slowly broke the kiss and savored the taste of Rose on her lips. Rose saw the blush in Maddie's cheeks and came back for another. Maddie was ready for her. Rose's tongue parted Maddie's lips and her tongue sought her friend's. Maddie responded with equal fervor and the two slowly lay down side by side. Rose opened her robe and guided Maddie's hand to her breast. Maddie withdrew her hand but not before feeling the firm roundness of it and the hard-protruding nipple that ached to be kissed. Maddie felt as though she was doing something bad and was fighting her urge to explore them more. Rose pushed her body up against Maddie's and she felt electrified by the sensations Rose created in her. Rose kissed her long and hard, pushing and writhing against her. Maddie face was warm against hers and she felt her heart racing as never before. Rose ran her hand inside Maddie's dress and rubbed her thigh before gently squeezing Maddie's ass. Maddie was wet and wanted to shed her clothes as much as she wanted to let go of her guilt. If she could only get past it, she could let Rose completely take her. Rose knew it was time to slow down and rolled onto her back. Maddie snuggled into her, laying her head on Rose's bare chest. Maddie reached over and placed her hand on Rose's breast, massaging it gently and lightly touched her nipple with the end of her finger. She turned her head and kissed the other breast, planting her open



mouth over Rose's nipple, tracing the outer edges of it with her tongue. Rose thrust her chest upward with desire and kissed Maddie again with a longing that wasn't there before.

A sudden knock at the door broke the spell as they both bolted upright. Maddie jumped off of the bed straitening her dress and smoothing her hair. Rose closed her robe and asked, "Who's there?"

"It's Charles the bellman Ma'am. There is a gentleman by the name of Michael Grant in the lobby asking to see you. What shall I tell him?"

"Uh, tell him I will be down in two minutes."

"Yes. Ma'am."

Exasperated, Rose said, "Shit, what does he want? Of all the damn times to call on someone. I am so sorry Maddie."

"It's fine. I should go now anyway."

Maddie started for the door and Rose said, "Wait." Rose came to her and kissed her sweetly one more time, cupping Maddie's face in her hands. Maddie smiled at her afterward, turned the doorknob and left the room.

Much to her relief, Maddie stepped out of the elevator without seeing Mr. Grant and hurriedly pushed through the door and out onto the street. What just happened up there in Rose's room she wondered, and couldn't help but feel an unfulfilled ache in her body and she didn't yet know what would have satisfied it. How could she make her feel like that? She tried to shake it off, and continued on her way to her own warm bed that was waiting for her just around the next corner.

"Hello, Rose," said Michael as Rose glided into the lobby.

"You wanted to see me?"

"Yes. I stopped by Maddie's hotel but she wasn't in. I wanted to tell you both that we will be leaving for Chicago tomorrow evening on the six o'clock train."

"I see."

Michael said, "For your own peace of mind, I wanted to tell you that Roswell Fykes has been arrested but is still unconscious."

Rose smiled and said, "He's in for a rude awakening."

"Also, Rose, there is going to be a handsome bonus for you. It turns out that not only did you recover our client's funds, you also got back all of the money he took from a cane sugar processor here in Savannah. They are very grateful for its return and very generous indeed with their reward."

"Really? I get a bonus on top of what I was already earning?"

"Yes. You can collect at the main office in Chicago when we get back. Just go in and ask for Mr. LeBate. Congratulations."

"Thank you. Thank you so much!"

"No. Thank you, Rose. We couldn't have done it without you."

It's late and I need to get some rest. So, I will say goodnight." He placed his hat on his head and left the hotel with Rose basking in a glorious state of good fortune.

"Well, that calls for a drink." Rose turned toward the hotel bar and said, "Bartender, get me a bourbon. Make that a double."

The next night, they all met at the train depot where Jeffery said on the platform, "As you know it is a long trip back to Chicago so I've booked pullman sleepers for us. Elise here is your ticket." She looked at it and sullenly boarded the train in search of her compartment.

"Michael and I will share this one," he said as he shoved the ticket into his breast pocket. "And, this one is for you two."

Maddie took the ticket and searched for the compartment number and after locating it said, "Let's get on board, Rose." She stepped onto the train with Rose right behind her.

As they walked down the aisle Rose asked, "Did you see Elise? I wonder what her problem is."

"I noticed that too."

Maddie stopped at a door and said, "This is it. Our home for the next two days." She slid the door open and stepped inside. They barely got settled when the conductor came through and knocked at the door. Rose jumped up and slid the door open. The conductor punched their tickets and reminded them to peruse the dinner menu and post their choice from the order card on the hook outside of their compartment. They looked the menu over and filled the cards out. Rose hung them out and sat down across from Maddie by the window.

The train began to roll. Rose looked wistfully out of the window and said, "Good bye, Savannah." She looked over at Maddie then back out the window. "I really liked this city. It's so different. The whole atmosphere is intoxicating."

Maddie, as usual after personal time with Rose, had trouble with conversation. She wished she could be more like her and just keep on rolling as if nothing had happened, but it did. She watched Rose gazing at the city that would soon be behind them and wondered if it was her experiences whoring that made it easy for her to shut out the bad things and always look forward. Maybe she doesn't let go of the bad things at all. Maybe that's why it was important for Rose to be with her last night. Maybe Roswell Fykes reminded her too much of the past and was looking for comfort. Maddie was in a way glad that she was there for her.

They rode along quietly for an hour when a bell rang out, informing them that dinner was available in the dining car. Maddie tapped Rose's shoulder and said, "Time to wake up, Rose. Our dinner is ready." Rose stirred and stretched.

They entered the dining car and found Michael sitting alone. "Mind if we join you," asked Rose?

"No, not at all. Please, be my guests."

Maddie sat down and said, "Good evening, Michael."

"Good evening."

Rose picked up a water glass and while checking it for water marks, said, "I noticed Elise wasn't her normal bitchy self when she got on board. What's the matter with her?"

"Honestly, I don't know. Jeffery is sitting with her at a table in the back. I'm hoping he will fill us in later."

Dinner arrived and they sat almost silently during the mainly tolerable dishes. Rose kept a close eye on the table at the far end of the dining car but couldn't get a fix on what their conversation consisted of. She was afraid it

might have something to do with her stabbing Roswell Fykes in the ass with a potentially lethal dose of horse tranquilizer. She kept her thoughts to herself about it. She didn't even tell Maddie what she had done.

Maddie locked the sliding door of their compartment and pulled the shade down over the window. "Help me make the bed," she said.

Rose asked, "There's a bed in here?"

"Yes. You are sitting on it." Rose stood up and watched as Maddie pulled the bottom cushion forward. Rose was astonished when the back came down level making it a bed for them both.

"I didn't know it could be made into a bed."

Maddie laughed and said, "Well, now you do."

From overhead, Maddie pulled down sheets, two pillows and a blanket. Rose said, "This is the way to travel. They think of everything."

Rose stripped down to her combination and slid under the top sheet and blanket next to the window. Maddie thought she was going to wear a sleeping gown but decided it would be alright to sleep in her combination too. Maddie turned the lantern out and they lay in the dark feeling the soothing motion of the train on the tracks.

Maddie said, "About last night. We shouldn't do that anymore."

Rose turned on her side to face her and asked, "Why not?"

Maddie rolled onto her side facing Rose and said, "Neither one of us has a, what did you call it, a wanker."

"So."

“So how in the world would we ever reach satisfaction without one. I don’t understand. Last night when I left you, I felt like I was going to explode.”

“If we hadn’t been interrupted you would have.”

“Would have what?”

“Exploded!”

Rose smiled and shook her head. “There is so much you just don’t know.”

“Don’t make fun of me, Rose,” Maddie said with a mixture of anger and pain.

“You’re the one with all the questions. I could take you there.”

“Where?”

“To the big explosion but, you don’t really want to go there so, we’re going to do whatever you say.”

Maddie rolled over with her back to Rose and said, “Good night.”

“Good night.”

Rose lay awake in the bed feeling as if she had failed Maddie and robbed her of some of her innocence. She felt shame about using her to bleach away the stains of Roswell Fykes and every other man who had ever touched her. She listened to Maddie’s gentle breathing and vowed to never touch her again. To insure it never would, she decided to use her bonus to move on. Once she was convinced it was the right thing to do, she drifted off to sleep.

Maddie and Rose sat across from each other in the dining car the next morning with little to talk about. Rose mindlessly stirred her coffee while Maddie watched a young couple obviously new to one another, totally



enamored, and unconcerned with anything beyond their table. Maddie thought of Enapay and how they interacted together in spite of their language barriers. She turned her gaze to Rose. There was no comparison between the only two lovers she had ever known. With Enapay, it was tender, loving and genuine between them. With Rose it was hungry, lusty manipulation.

Knowing she was Rose's conquest, didn't diminish her friendship with the brash beauty. She knew Rose just wanted to prove that with expertise, she could seduce anyone at any time. Maddie knew in her heart that what she truly wanted was the loving feeling she still held for the Lakota Hunter, Enapay.

Michael stepped up to their table, providing a new and welcome focus for them both. "Good morning, Ladies. May I join you?"

Rose perked up and said, "Yes, please."

He made a quick glance around the room and said, "Elise has been transferred to the Baltimore office."

Maddie asked, "Why, did she get a promotion?"

"In a way, I suppose. She'll head a government training program for the United States Secret Service."

Maddie looked astonished. "I wonder how that came about."

"She requested an interview and being the last of the originals under Kate Warne, she carried the clout needed to qualify. She was the best person for the job."

Rose seemed to lose interest in the conversation and her thoughts followed her eyes out the window.

"So, Rose, what are you going to do with that big bonus," Michael cheerfully asked.

Maddie looked surprised by the question. What bonus, she wondered.

“I have an idea but I haven’t made any decisions yet,” Rose said without looking back at them. Maddie had no idea what they were talking about and was a little put out that Rose hadn’t mentioned it to her at all. Then again, it was Rose’s business and if she wanted to share it with her, she would have already. Although she didn’t want to have bad thoughts about Rose, she was beginning to second guess her position with her.

The train ride was painfully long and made worse by the silence between them. Maddie spent most of the day in the sleeping compartment while Rose spent most of her time in the dining car. That night when the door slid open and Rose stepped in, she crawled into the bed and turned her back to Maddie.

“Good night, Rose,” Maddie said, and waited for the response that never came. The next day the train rolled into Chicago.

Maddie turned the key in the front door of the Brownstone and Rose brushed past her and up the stairs. Mrs. Hutchins was in the kitchen preparing dinner when Maddie entered the kitchen.

“Miss Maddie, all you have to do is pull the roast out of the oven in twenty minutes and let it sit for another fifteen minutes before you serve it. Is that suitable to you?”

“Yes. That’s fine. It smells wonderful,” Maddie exclaimed.

"I would stay, but the day has gotten away from me. Will you be needing me tomorrow?"

Maddie said with a smile, "I think we can manage without you tomorrow."

"Thank you, Miss Maddie," Mrs. Hutchins said on her way out.

Maddie stood at the bottom of the stairs and called, "Rose, dinner is ready." When Rose didn't answer, she went up to her room. Maddie took a deep breath and knocked on her closed door.

"What?" Rose loudly said with an angry tone.

"Dinner is ready. You won't want it to get cold. Mrs. Hutchins made us a nice roast."

"I'm not hungry."

Maddie didn't want a confrontation, but knew it couldn't be avoided. "Rose, does this have anything to do with what happened the other night on the train?"

The door opened and Rose said, "No. It has something to do with what is going to happen very soon."

With concern Maddie asked, "What Rose, what's going to happen?"

"I want to see my mother. I'm going back to Bear Gulch."

"We can do that. I'd like to see Daddy and maybe I could see Enapay while we are there. I think it's a great idea."

"No Maddie, you don't understand. I'm going back to stay."

"But you love it here in Chicago."

"Stop Maddie."

"Why Rose? Why would you go there to stay?"

“Out there I can do what I do best. Separate the men from their money.”

“Rose, you can’t go to Bear Gulch and be a whore. I won’t let you.”

“I’m not going there to be a whore. I’m going there to open a saloon. I have my own money. I can do what I want.”

“Are you sure that’s what you want to do? Have you given it enough time to think ...”

“Yes Maddie, I have.”

“When?”

“As soon as I can after I collect my bonus money and pay from Pinkerton’s.”

“I see.”

“I’m sorry, it’s just time. I need to do something good for myself and this is something I can make work.” Rose pointed to her chest and said, “For me.”

“Maddie turned toward the stairs and said, “Dinner is getting cold.”

It was early afternoon when Rose stepped into the brownstone with her bonus and a train ticket. She immediately went to her room and began packing for her return to Bear Gulch. Maddie knew the end was near, but didn’t come out of her room. She listened as Rose lugged her trunk out of her room and to the top of the stairs.

Maddie got up from her window seat and walked up the stairs. “Let me help you with that,” she said.

“Thank you. It’s very heavy. I’m leaving with much more than I came here with,” Rose said as she came back out of her room with a carpet bag.

“Rose, I want you to know that if for some reason it doesn’t work out, you are welcome to come back.”

“I’m going to do my best to make it work,” Rose said with a touch of pleading honesty in her voice that could easily be seen on her face.

Maddie grabbed onto one of the leather strap handles of the trunk and asked, “What time does your train leave?”

“Four.” Rose said grabbing the other strap. Together they struggled their way down both flights of stairs and stopped to rest at the bottom.

Rose started to look a little misty. Her voice cracked as she said, “I’m going down to the corner and wave down a carriage.”

“Let me go with you and see you off at the station,” Maddie said almost begging with tears in her eyes.

“No, I can do this, besides I think it would be harder if you came along.”

Rose returned shortly and came in the front door with the carriage driver behind her. He carried the trunk out for her, leaving Maddie and Rose standing face to face.

“Rose, I want you to know that you are the best friend I have ever had and I will miss you terribly. I will remember you always.”

Rose wiped a tear from her cheek and hugged Maddie very tightly. Maddie felt Rose’s tears on her own cheek and tasted it with her fingers when Rose rushed out of the house. She waited in the doorway long after the carriage had disappeared from sight. Assured she was not returning; she closed the front door.

The next few hours turned into the next several days and finally a knock at the door broke the deafening silence. She opened the door to a uniformed delivery boy from the telegraph office.

She took the telegram from the boy's hand and started to read while he patiently waited to be tipped. Engrossed with its contents, she was oblivious to his presence.

"I am so sorry. Wait here, I'll be right back." she apologetically said. As he peddled away on his bicycle, Maddie stood in the doorway reading words she hoped she would never see.

The telegram was sent by Hazel Meade, requesting she come to Bear Gulch as soon as possible. Her Father was ill and wanted to see her before it was too late. Paralysis on the right side of his body and face limited his speech, but he was perfectly clear and demanding about Maddie's return.



## Chapter Seventeen

### Facing Change

Maddie returned to Bear Gulch a different woman than the girl who came to this wild, lawless territory a long time ago. So much had happened since her first sight of this wretched place. Jeanita was at the station to meet her and the sight of her lifted her spirit considerably. They chatted about Daddy's condition on the drive to the house and caught up on Hazel's position with him. Maddie wasn't sure how she would work Rose into the conversation, but didn't have to.

"Rose came by to see me and told me of her good fortune. She's renting a place upstairs of the hardware for the time being."

"She doing well then," Maddie asked.

"She seems to be just fine," Jeanita cheerfully said.

"Good."

"She bought the empty lot a block down from the bank and has hired men to start building her saloon."

"It seems that Rose has been busy," Maddie said.

"Indeed, she has."

They stopped in front of the house.

Jeanita said, "I'd rather get your things in the front door than drag them in from the back of the house. Save a few backbreaking steps this way."

They carried Maddie's trunk to the front door where Hazel was waiting with the door wide open for them. Hazel nervously smiled at Maddie. She didn't get to know her very well before she left for Chicago, and always felt that Maddie didn't trust her intentions with Daddy.

"Hello Madison, please come in. I'm sorry, of course you'll come in. This is your home. I didn't mean anything ..."

"Thank you, Hazel, and thank you for looking after daddy. Is he in his study?"

"Yes. Yes he is and has been waiting for you," Hazel said. She seemed to be relieved that Maddie took no offense from her babbling attempt to welcome her to her own home. She felt foolish and hoped she would handle future conversations in a more settled fashion.

Maddie stepped into her father's study and pretended that she wasn't shocked by his appearance. His body leaned to the right with his withered hand in his lap. His face was frozen on the right side in a grotesque manner that made Maddie want to cry but she did not. She showed her strength as she always did.

She walked behind his desk and laid her arm around his shoulder bending over to kiss his cheek.

"Hello Daddy," she whispered.

His mouth was moving but no words found their way out of his throat. Finally after a great struggle, he said,

"Mmm..aa..dddd ..ie."

"I'm home now. I'm going to stay with you and see to it that you get better," Maddie said. He fell into silence and stared at the far side of the room as if his brain had shutdown. Maddie called out, "Hazel, can you come in here, please."

Hazel's shoes made a large clatter on the hardwood floors in the foyer as she hurried to the study. "Yes. Is everything all right," Hazel asked.

"He seems to have drifted off, but he's not sleeping. I checked. He's breathing," Maddie said with controlled alarm in her voice.

"He does that quite often. Dr. Myer says that it's typical with this kind of affliction," Hazel offered, knowing it provided little comfort or assurance that he was somehow going to return to his former self.

"Hazel, can you get me something to clean his face with. His nose is draining and he has spittle on his chin."

"I'll get it," Hazel said as she rushed out of the study. Hazel returned with a clean handkerchief and reached for Mr. Border's face.

Maddie said, "I've got this." She took the embroidered handkerchief with his initials in the corner and wiped his nose and cleaned off his chin.

She stood back and looked at the shell that was once her brilliant father. There he sat, helpless in a wheelchair, yet dressed in a suit. Always ready to do business. Maddie smiled to herself knowing that Daddy probably insisted on being dressed for work. So successful, generous, loving and kind. She knew he had to be in there somewhere. Life couldn't treat her father so cruelly after he had worked so hard to give Maddie and her Mother a life that most just

dreamed about. He was a good man all of his life. Why was this terrible thing destroying him of all people.

Maddie carried her thoughts out of the study, leaving Hazel to attend to him. Maddie went down the hall and through the kitchen. The back door was ajar and Maddie found Jeanita just outside, smoking a cigarette. Maddie took one out of her handbag and struck a match. "How long has he been like this?"

Jeanita took a draw from her cigarette and said, "It's been two weeks since I found him in the foyer. He was fine at breakfast and was getting ready to go to the bank when I heard him fall. He just keeled over. I left him and got Doc Myer."

Maddie let Jeanita's words roll through her head for a moment and stubbed out her cigarette. "I think I'll go see this Doctor Myer and find out what happened and what sort of timeline we are to expect for recovery."

Jeanita looked at Maddie and knew she would have to tell her what she knew about this type of affliction. "Maddie, I've seen this happen before to folks and they sometimes don't get any better. More often than not, they have more seizures that end up killing them. I'd like to tell you something different, but I can only tell you what I've seen."

Hazel came out and asked, "Jeanita, would you help me get Mr. Border into bed?"

Jeanita followed her into the house with the door closing behind them. Maddie looked over to the carriage house and slowly meandered to the door. She slid it open and stepped inside. She looked at the empty stall where her old friend Jangles lived before his new life began with the Lakota. She looked up to the loft and climbed the wooden ladder. She

went over and sat down where Rose had slept off a drunk more than once under a blanket that was no longer there.

She felt as though she was losing everything and everyone that was ever important to her. She thought of Enapay and knew the Lakota wouldn't be back for at least another three months. Even then, they may have nothing more than a past between them. Rose was so close, right here in Bear Gulch but nowhere near where she was at one time. At that time, they were the best of friends.

Maddie tried to eat the dinner Jeanita made for her, but she just couldn't. "I'm sorry, Jeanita. I know you went through a lot of trouble to make it just for me, and I appreciate your thoughtfulness very much. I just don't feel much like eating."

"I understand. Maybe you'll feel up to it in a little while," she said. Maddie found the tiniest of smile and offered it up to Jeanita. She came over to Maddie and hugged her patting her on the back. "It's so nice to see you home again, Maddie."

Jeanita heard Maddie sniffle and said, "That's all right. You just let it all out." It was as if the dam had broken and Maddie bawled like a child with a skinned knee. Jeanita held her close, and consoled her for as long as Maddie wanted.

The sun came up again and Maddie was ready to face whatever it brought with the new day. She pulled the sleeping gown over her head and opened the closet in her room and immediately pulled on her wool pants. She found her favorite shirt and wide brimmed hat She started to feel

more like herself when she strapped on her holster and felt the weight of her six gun drop inside it. She took a quick look in the mirror and said, "All I need now is a horse."

Maddie walked into the livery barn and asked, "Mr. Whitman, have you got a good horse to sell?"

Mr. Whitman looked shorter and older than Maddie remembered and watched him as he shuffled toward her.

"Yes Ma'am, I do have a fine selection of - Don't I know you from somewhere?"

"I've bought from you in the past and rented a couple of horses when I needed to."

Mr. Whitman squinted his failing eyes and said, "You the banker's daughter."

"Yes sir, Maddie Border. Can you show me what you've got?"

Maddie looked over the horses in the barn and didn't see one she wanted to call her own.

Mr. Whitman said, "Now hold on a minute. I gotta green broke filly out back I was thinkin' bout keepin' to myself. She's a pretty one for sure and sound as can be. Wanna see her?"

Maddie said, "Wouldn't hurt to take a look."

She followed him out the back barn door to a small paddock where she stood with six other horses.

"That's her right there," Mr. Whitman said, pointing to a beautiful sorrel filly with four white socks, a matching perfect blaze on her face and a flaxen mane and tail.

Maddie walked up to her and spoke gently as she looked her over. The filly seemed as curious about Maddie as she was of her. "You say she's green broke. Just how green?"



"She takes a bit and been under a saddle and rode some. That's about all I can say. She's just three years old far as I know.

"I don't think I'd be interested in a green broke horse unless she was willing to work," Maddie said, still looking her over and rubbing her sides and legs. "Seems to be fairly easy going on the ground. Would you be willing to let me ride her?"

Mr. Whitman said, "Sure enough. I'll get you a saddle and bridle. You get acquainted and I'll be right back."

Maddie looked the filly in the eye and had a silent moment of understanding with her. She patted the girl on the neck and felt a connection that she was certain the filly was a part of. Mr. Whitman returned with a bridle and tried to slide it in her mouth. She wanted nothing to do with it and shook her head as she backed away.

"Goddamn it! That Indian what sold her to me told me she was rode." growled Mr. Whitman.

"You bought her from an Indian," Maddie asked.

"Yes, I did and if he was lyin' to me, I'll kill him if I ever cross paths with him agin'."

Maddie clicked her cheek making the sound Jangles responded to and started to walk. The filly followed close behind her.

"Mr. Whitman, a horse that isn't trained properly barely has any value whatsoever. How much do you want for her?"

He thought for a minute and said, "Fifty-five dollars with a saddle and bridle."

Maddie paused and countered with, "I don't need a saddle Mr. Whitman. I'll give you forty as she stands."

“Would you go forty-five,” he asked.

Maddie looked over the filly once again trying not to show how much she was drawn to the little sorrel and said, “She’s going to need training and that doesn’t come cheap. Forty dollars cash right now.”

Mr. Whitman said, “Yer gonna need a halter and a lead just to get her to your place. That’ll be an extra three dollars.”

“So long as the halter is sturdy and the lead isn’t frayed,” Maddie said, and stuck out her hand to shake on the deal.

He took her hand and said, “I ain’t in the mood to argue today so, you got yourself a horse.”

Maddie led her back to the carriage house and put straw down in her stall before bringing her into her new home. The little sorrel was curious about the carriage horse who showed no interest in the new addition what so ever. She’d been around a long time and had seen many other barn mates come and go over the years, but this youngster was curious about everything around her.

Maddie talked to the filly, saying “You’re going to need a name. Something that reflects who you are, as I see you anyway.” Maddie took a brush to her and said, “Let’s see, you are definitely friendly and affectionate.” The filly nuzzled her. “I don’t think anyone has abused or mistreated you. Beautiful for sure, young and fresh as the morning dew.” Maddie wrapped her arms around the filly’s neck and whispered, “Chumani, your name is Chumani.” The filly rubbed her nose against Maddie’s shoulder. “I have to go visit the Doctor, but when I get back, we are going to go for a little ride and see what you can do.”

Maddie waited for the doctor to return from a house call and when he did, Maddie stood up and said, I'm Franklin Border's daughter Maddie, and I want to know more about my daddy's condition."

Doctor Myer looked surprised to find the daughter of a prominent citizen such as Mr. Border wearing pants and a six-gun covered by an elk hyde fringed coat. He couldn't say at his tender age that he had seen it all before, considering he was all of twenty-five years old and new to the territory. He wasn't at all what Maddie expected either. She thought he would be much older, not this tall blue-eyed blonde-haired man with a disarmingly handsome face.

"Miss Border, your father suffered a cerebrovascular accident. When that happens, part of the brain loses its blood supply and those brain cells die. The result is what you have been witnessing. The paralysis of his right side, the loss of speech and facial muscle control."

"When I was talking to him something seemed to happen and he stared off across the room as if he was sleeping with his eyes open and didn't snap back for a long time. Do you know why?"

Doctor Myer said, "He's having seizures associated to the stroke. Not all victims have seizures, but the ones who do have a higher mortality rate. He does have an irregular heartbeat and that may be due to clotting, could be a large amount of plaque, cholesterol and high blood pressure all of which your father is at risk with."

"Is he going to get better?"

"I would be surprised if he improves much, Miss Border. You never know. He had a major cerebrovascular accident. The worst I've ever seen."

"But you haven't actually seen that many. You are awfully young," Maddie said, looking for a thread of hope.

"I interned at Boston General and saw plenty. He could live a year or longer in the same condition provided he can continue to swallow. If he can't, he will develop pneumonia from fluid and food that gets into his lungs that will cause an infection."

Maddie sighed and looked down at the floor. "So really all we can do is look after him and look for signs of other complications."

Dr. Myer said, "That's correct. I wish there was a more positive action that would lead to a different outcome, but I don't see it."

Maddie put on her wide brimmed hat and shook his hand. "Thank you, Doctor for your time and filling me in. It doesn't exactly put me at ease but, now I know where we stand. Can I call on you if there are any new developments?"

"Absolutely, and it was a pleasure meeting you, Miss Border," the doctor said, as he walked her to the door.

He watched from the window as Maddie crossed the street.

"Very interesting young woman," he mumbled under his breath.

Maddie walked in the front door of the house where Jeanita was busy mopping the foyer. Maddie hung up her

coat and said, "He told me exactly what you had already told me yesterday."

Never looking up from the floor she was vigorously cleaning Jeanita said, "He's the doctor. You listen to what he says. I just know what I've seen."

"How's Daddy?"

"He's dressed, had his breakfast and he thinks he's working in his study," Jeanita said.

"I'll go in and say good morning," Maddie said as she turned into the study.

His eyes followed her over to his desk. She came around the side to him and kissed his cheek. He tried to speak but nothing came out of his mouth.

"Good morning Daddy. I went to see the doctor this morning and he says this might take a while before you are all better." She wiped his chin of drool and said, "I bought a trail horse. She's young but I think she will work out. I'm going to take her out today and see what she knows and work on what she doesn't." She started for the door with his eyes upon her. She turned and said, "I want to go to the bank and see how Hazel is getting along too."

Maddie opened the sliding door to the carriage house to Chumani's nicker. She stepped up to her stall where she was waiting. "We're are going to get a little exercise today." Maddie pulled the saddle off of it's rack and said, "We're going to use the saddle today because I don't know if you want to throw me or not and I stand a better chance of staying up with it on you." Maddie opened her gate and led her outside, hitching her to the fence. She lifted the saddle gently onto Chumani's back and watched to see if she would flinch or try to shake it off, but she stood steady

and still. Maddie reached under her belly and cinched her tight. "Good girl", she said patting her on the neck.

"I know you don't take a bit very well, so I have a hackamore for you. I think you will be fine with it."

Maddie pulled herself up on her side to see how she was with weight on her back. Maddie was pleased to find Chumani had shifted her weight to accept her. She climbed onto her back and gently turned her with leg commands. Maddie smiled from ear to ear. "I was right about you. You're a free rein Indian pony." She was so excited that her hunch about the Sorrel Chestnut was right, they took an easy walk to the edge of town. Once there, Maddie said, "Let's ride."

She nudged her to a slow canter and enjoyed her silky-smooth gait. Maddie realized she had a quality horse under the saddle and began to wonder why anyone would want to sell her to Whitman for less than what she had paid for her. She let the reins lay across the saddle horn and controlled Chumani with her legs. She brought her to a stop and took off the saddle. She gripped her by the mane and swung herself up. She left the hackamore on but did not touch it so that they could ride as whoever trained her had intended. For Maddie, it was like a dream. Riding together as one, far from the troubling feeling she still carried about Rose and the reality of her Daddy's condition. At that moment she was as free as she could ever be.

They rode up the hill to the old homestead and stopped at the creek where Chumani drank from the cold flowing stream. Maddie watched the last of the ice crystals sink into the grass and knew that spring was coming soon and that meant the return of the Lakota and Enapay. She looked to



the spot where she first kissed Enapay's lips and longed for his touch once again. She mounted the Sorrel and turned her toward home.



## Chapter Eighteen

### A World Apart

Spring finally arrived and Daddy was feeling much better. He was up walking and his speech had returned to almost normal. His facial disfigurement was all but gone with just a pull at the corner of his eye that made him look as if he were winking. He complained about being stuck in the house and was quite vocal about returning to the bank. Sometimes sputtering in a somewhat comical rage with Doctor Myer, demanding to know when he could get back to work.

“What do you mean by, in a limited capacity. It’s my goddamned bank, you know,” he’d say.

Maddie was anxious to see if the Lakota had returned and made almost daily rides to the top of the hill that overlooked where the village had been. On her return as she came down the main street, she marked the progress of Rose’s saloon being built a few lots from her Daddy’s bank. The sound of carpenters pounding nails seemed to echo

through the whole town as the building took shape. From the corner of her eye, she watched as the workers carried fresh lumber where they framed the second floor. She always kept her eyes open hoping for a glimpse of Rose among them.

“No Rose, No Lakota,” Maddie thought as she passed. Everyone seemed worlds away from her and it left her feeling empty inside. “Maybe tomorrow,” she muttered when she put Chumani into her stall.

The tomorrows came again and again. Daddy bullied his way back into his office at the bank and a sign hung over the entrance of the new saloon, “The Lakota Rose.” She still hadn’t seen its owner or the doors open to business.

Maddie held her breath as she crested the hill and her heart filled with joy when she saw the tipi village alive with activity below her. Slowly she came down the hill and entered the village. The Lakota who had welcomed her before, would not look into her eyes and the children that once crowded around her stood back and watched from a distance. Something had changed. Enapay saw Maddie first and started walking toward her. She smiled and felt her heart start to pound as the distance between them closed in. He too seemed different, distant. She got off of her horse and stood face to face with him. She didn’t see the hunter she had left a long time ago. He had changed. He looked as if he wanted to say something but was at a loss for words. Even if they spoke the same language, there were none to share.

A young Lakota woman stepped up between them and pushed Enapay back and turned to face Maddie with a look

of anger mixed with fear upon her face. Maddie saw that she was very round in the belly and knew immediately that she was protecting her future with the father of her child. Stunned, Maddie looked into Enapay's face, searching for something that would tell her she was mistaken. The Lakota woman again pushed Enapay further away from Maddie.

He looked as though he was torn, but still he turned away. The Lakota woman, Enapay's woman, let Maddie know she was not welcome and needed to get back on her horse and go. Maddie got the message that needed no explanation and, in a daze, she turned Chumani back up the hill.

The next few days were filled with grief, sleepless nights, endless curls of smoke from cigarettes that left her throat dry and sore. There was crying and bawling like a calf that only Jeanita seemed to know how to stop for short periods of time and she was so thankful for those breaks from it all. When she did sleep, she slept hard and well into the day. Jeanita knocked on her door and said, "Maddie, it's time you got up and pulled yourself together. I want you to come downstairs and eat something."

"I'm not hungry."

"Make yourself get up and eat. Now," Jeanita said, sounding like a mother instead of a housekeeper. Maddie liked this side of Jeanita that was emerging out of necessity and smiled before she lifted her head from her pillow. Maddie knew that she really cared and was glad that somebody still did. She got up and went down to the kitchen.

"I fed and watered the horses. They are insistent about being looked after early in the morning," Jeanita said as she slid scrambled eggs out of a skillet onto a plate in front of

Maddie. She picked up a fork and pushed the eggs around the plate.

“Don’t play with it. Get it down,” Jeanita said as she poured coffee into Maddie’s cup.

Jeanita’s constant push was just the thing Maddie needed. It wasn’t long and she was sleeping again, smoking less and finding it increasingly difficult to find any more tears. She awoke each day searching for something to occupy her time. She helped out at the bank even though she wasn’t really needed. Hazel had everything under control and she didn’t understand exactly what it was that Daddy did there all day. She started to think about Chicago and the Pinkerton’s Agency and what she might be missing.

“Daddy, I don’t think you really need me to be here any longer and I’m wondering if you’d mind my returning to Chicago,” she said feeling him out about the idea.

“I think it is a grand idea. You don’t want to risk being overlooked for an exciting assignment,” Daddy replied with great enthusiasm.

“If you wouldn’t mind.”

“Absolutely not. I think you should go to the telegraph office right away and let your superiors know of your plans to return,” said Mr. Border.

That was all she needed to hear. She stepped outside of the bank and let out a sigh of relief. She rode Chumani past Rose’s now open saloon, and kept her eyes on the street ahead of her. She didn’t need any emotional upsets in her path and wasn’t about to go looking for one. Maddie wondered what she was really leaving behind. A man who made no promise, a friend and one-time lover who in the end was just about the money. She thinks she should have



known it would end as it began. Leaving a lawless town like Bear Gulch won't cause her any grief. Sure, Daddy will still be here but he has Jeanita who will look after him and you never truly leave your parents, you just move on.

Later that afternoon, a knock at the door sent Jeanita to receive the telegram being delivered to Maddie. "Maddie, it's here," she called out in a loud voice.

Maddie rushed down the stairs and read it aloud.

"Anxious for your return. We need your skills in London, England with the recovery of a priceless art collection. A handsome bonus for the apprehension and conviction of the perpetrators of the heist applies to this investigation. Safe travels. M. LeBate"

Maddie spent the afternoon in a daze, but this time it was not a cloudy bombardment of injury to her spirit. It was the joy of a new adventure in a place she hadn't been since she was ten years old. She kept reminding herself to not let her excitement cloud her judgement and cause the investigation to fail, but right now, at home in Bear Gulch, she could allow her happiness to carry her far, far away. After packing her trunk, she ran down the stairs in search of Jeanita, who she found sitting on the back porch smoking a cigarette.

"There you are," she said, swinging the back door open to join her. "I can't wait for Daddy to get home to tell him the

good news, so I'm going to see him in his office." Jeanita smiled and nodded her head.

Maddie came out of the bank filled with optimism only to find Rose standing beside Chumani. It startled her, but she quickly regained composure and said, "Hello, Rose."

"Pretty nice horse you have there."

"Thank you," Maddie said with caution. She wondered for a moment why, now of all times, Rose made an effort to see her. She had to have known she was back in Bear Gulch and could have spoken sooner.

"I've seen you around town, but you haven't come in to the Lakota Rose to see me. I wanted you to see what I've done with the place," Rose said.

Maddie found her strength and said, "When you saw me around town, why didn't you invite me in?"

"It wasn't ready. I wasn't ready. I'm sorry I left you the way I did, but I needed to go."

Maddie answered her with, "I see." She was bound and determined not to let her off the hook. No more was she going to swallow her hurt feelings and say that it was fine and that she understands. She wasn't about to show forgiveness for the long and steady stream of abuses Rose brought to what amounted to a friendship of convenience.

"So, would you like to see my saloon?"

"I have to go to the train station and pick up my ticket to Chicago. I have an assignment in London."

"London? England?"

"Yes, I leave in the morning and have a lot to accomplish beforehand, so I think not," Maddie said as she swung up on Chumani's back. "Maybe next time."

Maddie turned her horse toward home, leaving Rose speechless on the side of the street. After closing that chapter of her life, she felt good. As she passed by the little town cemetery, she paused and thought about saying goodbye to her mother, but urged Chumani onward. Maddie didn't know what she would have had to say and wasn't really keen to the idea of talking to a plot of ground where the bones of her mother were the only thing under it. She knew it was her final ride on the Sorrel and rewarded her with sugar when she put her up in her stall.

Not wanting to ignore the carriage horse, she rewarded her as well before closing the door. The rest of the day was filled with decisions. What to take and what to leave behind. In the end, a carpet bag holding her guns, a wide brimmed hat and a pair of wool pants were all that really mattered.

Daddy was unusually chatty at dinner, reminding her that she had been to London before. "I think you were eight or nine when we crossed the Atlantic to England."

"I was ten."

"Yes, you were, that's right. Your mother was sick and threw up the entire way there and back."

It was the first time she heard her father speak of her mother since her passing and there wasn't even a hint of pain in his voice. Maddie smiled knowing he was going to be just fine and there was no longer any need to worry about leaving him.

Maddie wore her nicest dress that morning and was armed to the teeth, with a knife in its sheath strapped to her leg and a pistol in her handbag. She was quite comfortable with her

weapons and wouldn't dream of being on her own without them. She might not have ever given a thought to protecting herself this way had it not been for the chapters in her life that her time in the Lakota Territory provided. In a few hours, that chapter would be behind her too. A lot was behind her. Rose, Bear Gulch, and the hopes of Enapay's touch once again were all squashed and gone. Maybe there was a little sadness, maybe a little anger, but mostly, freedom. Fresh with the renewal that arrives every spring of every year, Maddie happily climbed into the carriage that Jeanita had brought around to the front of the house.

Maddie boarded the train and found her way to her sleeper compartment. She sat and watched through the window as Jeanita rolled away toward the life that would continue without her. Another moment passed, and the whistle blew sending a gush of steam into the cool late morning air. Her compartment lurched as the couplings pulled tight when the engine pulled out of the station. The train rolled across the grassy plains much slower than Maddie would prefer. She didn't relish looking at the land she had crossed many times before on the back of her old friend, Jangles. There were too many memories, good and bad, connected to the sacred grounds of the Lakota.

She wanted to turn away but didn't. It was as if there was one more act of completion to be carried out before this chapter was truly closed and it presented itself the very next moment. A hunter on a paint horse came into view. His horse stood still as he watched the train move across the landscape he was a part of. He was suddenly close enough for Maddie to clearly see his face.

In one final act of closure, she reached up, and pulled down the window shade.

The End





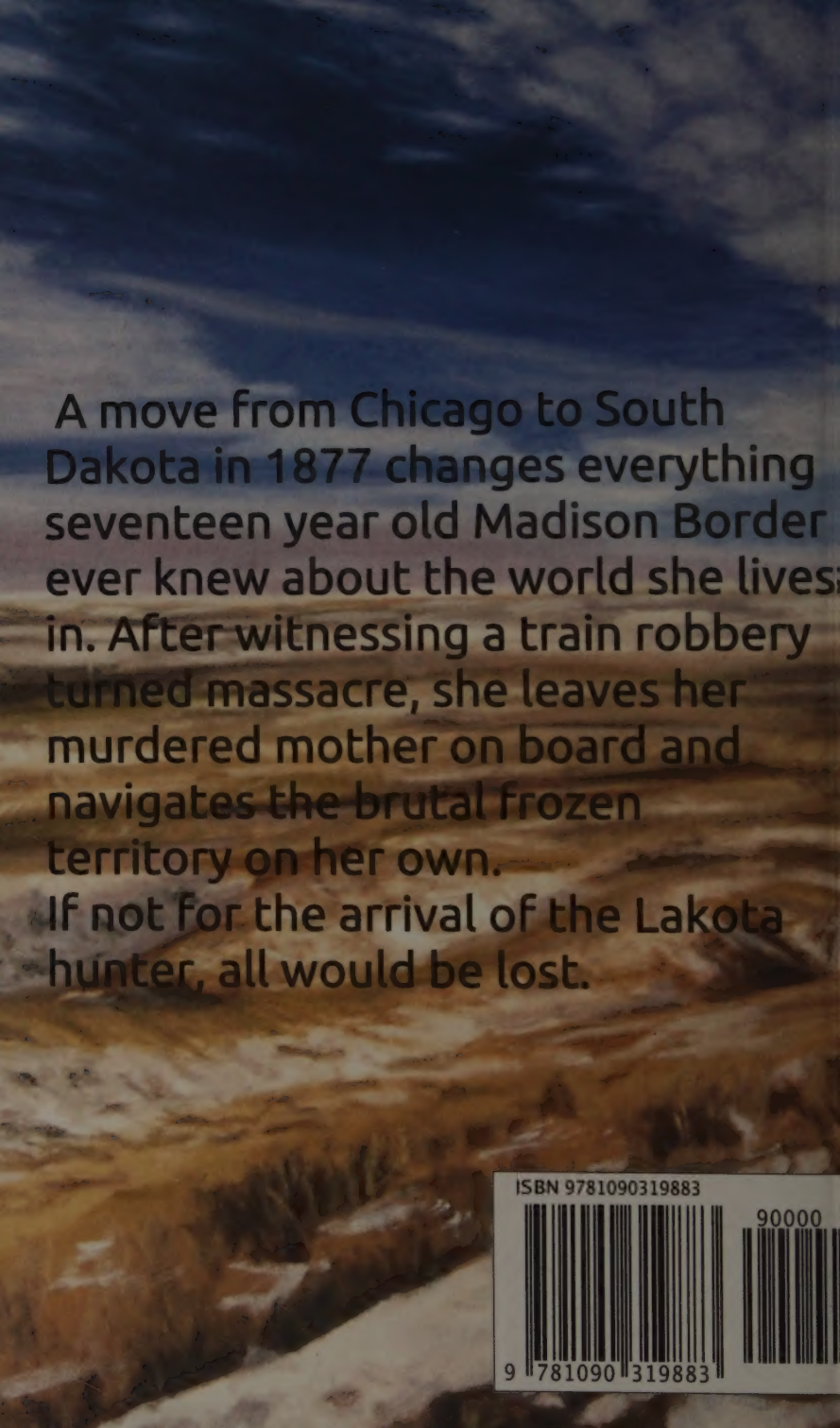


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A move from Chicago to South Dakota in 1877 changes everything seventeen year old Madison Border ever knew about the world she lives in. After witnessing a train robbery turned massacre, she leaves her murdered mother on board and navigates the brutal frozen territory on her own. If not for the arrival of the Lakota hunter, all would be lost.

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